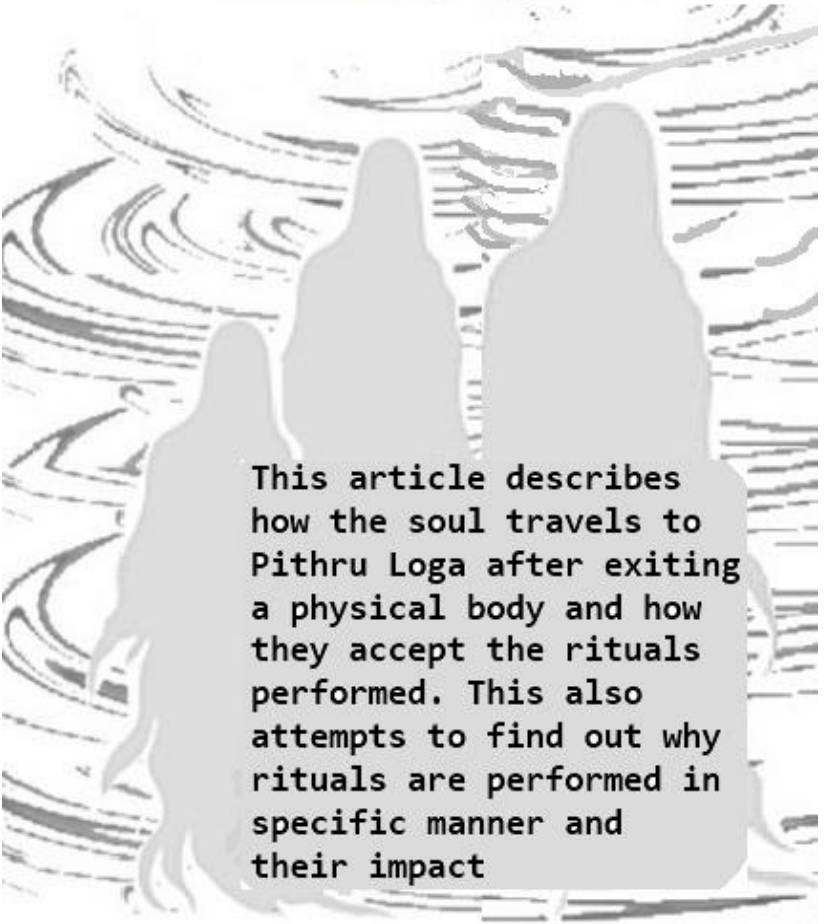
JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA (SOUL)

– Santhipriya –



This article describes how the soul travels to Pithru Loga after exiting a physical body and how they accept the rituals performed. This also attempts to find out why rituals are performed in specific manner and their impact

Prologue

I observed that the Garuda Purana is traditionally recited on the 13th day purification ceremony called Subasweekaram, a post death ritual performed in most of the homes of hindus. Garuda Purana is a dialogue between Lord Vishnu and his divine vehicle Garuda; Lord Vishnu describing the soul's journey after death. The Garuda Purana describes the journey of the soul after it exited a physical body till its arrival in Pitru Loka, the realm of the ancestors

This perilous journey of the soul involved several stages of transition; the rituals performed by the family of the deceased playing a crucial role in helping the soul's progress on way to Pithru Loga.

The purpose of recital and explaining the contents of Garuda Purana perhaps was meant to educate the folks, especially the younger generation to understand the hindu traditions and cultures practiced in the ancient past by our forefathers and deeper meanings involved in the rites and rituals performed.

It is believed that by listening to the recital of Garuda Purana, the soul on way to Pithru Loga via Yama Loga gets guided along its path and become freed of its past sins, thus assisting in its ultimate liberation or salvation. Further the recital also provides a structured and spiritual activity to the family to focus on during a period of intense grief which offer them psychological comfort and mental solace.

Based on what I understood from the pundits during my visit to many temples in deeper Tamilnadu, Garuda Purana story heard twice or thrice in the Subasweekaram and material collected from other sources, I have attempted to

explain in brief the meanings for each of the rites and ritual activities performed, the spiritually impure periods called as mourning observed etc so that it will help the future generation understand what traditions we practiced in ancient periods of time and how many of those beliefs have scientific sanctity .

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Born in the year 1945 in Tamilnadu, and basically a Printing Technologist, I served in various Central Govt organizations such as Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) under the then Ministry of Scientific affairs, Govt of India; Bank Note Press, Ministry of Finance, Dept of Economic Affairs, Govt of India, Dewas, engaged in the printing of Bank Notes and Currencies, before finally superannuated in the capacity of a senior official in the year 2005. After retirement I worked in the capacity of a Consultant in Security Printing; obtained a Patent on new technique for numbering of currencies and participated in an international conference in Hongkong as a special invitee to present a paper on counterfeiting menace.

Under the Pen name 'SANTHIPRIYA', I am pursuing the art of writing; have written over 1500 spiritual articles in English and Tamil covering several Temples, Mahans and other historical stories connected to spiritual world and published them in my own website https://pages.santhipriya.com/.

Have translated over 2500 pages of english articles into Tamil for various websites. Few of the voluminous books written by me have been published by few of the groups engaged in spreading spiritual knowledge and few more are likely to be published soon. To help the students in printing, I have published many articles and Question and Answers in my website https://printing.santhipriya.com/.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL-1

Know what is a Jeevathma, Physical body, Pithrus, Adithyas, Rudras and Vasus

1. The soul called subtle body or Jeevathma is invisible; it resides in a physical body and indestructible. The moment the subtle body leaves the physical body in which it resided, the physical body becomes a lifeless corpse. The philosophy of life is - the soul temporarily resides in a physical body for some period of time, may be years, months, days or even fractions of hours as destined to the specific soul and thereafter, when it deserts the physical body, it goes back to divine plane from where it travelled to the earth to enter in a physical body. In one of the divine planes called Yama Loga, it undergoes punishments commensurate to the Karmas carried by the body in which it lived before re-entering into another physical body to continue another journey.

2. As per agamic, puranic and several other hindu texts 'the soul is formless divine energy emanated from Supreme Brahman, through Lord Brahma to perform the destined act on earth. It enters either into a human body or into that of animals and birds.

3. Each one of the physical bodies (which we call the material body) in which the invisible soul resides carries fifteen divine energies some as the sun in the form of eye, fire in the form of mouth, and Lord Indra in the form of hand. The fifteen divine energies are broadly categorised under five sensory organs called Jnanendriyas, five organs of action known as karmendriyas and five vital breaths known as pranas . The physical body is the sixteenth divine aspect.

That is the reason why, when the soul deserts the physical body, certain rituals called samskaras (in Sanskrit) are done to dedicate the lifeless corpse to the divine who sent it to the earth.

4. Like how in a yagya, a sacred hindu ritual, various symbolic offerings like grains, ghee, herbs, sandal wood pieces and other sacred substances are put into the fire (Agni) to purify the environment and connect with the divine, in cremation which is also another form of yagya, the physical body imbibed with fifteen divine energies are put into the flame of fire to send them back to the divine. In scriptures, this highest sacred ritual of cremation is called 'Antyeshti' which literally means 'last sacrifice'.

5. Thus, the act of cremation of a corpse is considered equivalent in all aspects to an agni homa. Only upon completion of the Pithru karmas, performed for twelve days after the physical body of the demised is cremated, the fifteen divine energies and aspect imbibed in the burnt corpse return to their respective places in the heavenly abode.

6. Various post -cremation rituals performed for the demised (dead) for 12 days are called Pithru Karmas. Following the 12-day rituals, the purification ceremony marking end of mourning on the 13th day is called Subasweekaram or Teheravin in which family and friends participate, offer prayers, partake community meals and charitable acts to help the departed soul rest in peace.

7. From then on, every year the death anniversary is performed to the demised (dead) during the Pithru Paksha (Sanskrit term for the same is Pitri Paksha) period in the name of Shardha ceremony.

8. Once the soul called subtle body deserts the physical body, it goes into the protective custody of Vasus, Ekadasa Rudras, Adithyas also known as Dwadasiyas, a special task force kept created by Lord Brahma to protect the souls which leaves physical body.

9. In Hinduism and Vedic traditions, Goddess Bhooma devi, Agni (fire), Vayu (wind/air), and Varuna (water) are fundamentally important for earthly life as they represent the essential elements that sustain and transform life on earth. In the same manner the eight Vasus, eleven Ekadasa Rudras and the Adithyas, also known as the Dwadasiyas, created by Brahma, are important for protecting the souls which deserts the physical body till 12^{th} day rituals are completed.

10. Millions of souls of the ancestors called Pithrus stay in the heavenly abode designated as Pithru loga, awaiting instructions from Brahma. The Pithrus have been kept divided into several lakhs of groups, each group consisting of seven generational Pithrus specific to each of a family. Once a new Pithru from the seven generations of the specific families enter into the heavenly abode as Pithrus, the Pithrus in the order of first, second, and third line have to exit Pithru Loga to turn into divine agents of Lord Brahma in the form of Vasus, Rudras and Adithyas before Lord Brahma send them to take next birth as humans or as animals or as insects, etc according to their karmic deeds. Thus, in Pithru loga, at any given point of time, only seven Pithrus in the specific lineage of a family stay. Those Pithrus, who turn into Vasus, Rudras protect the souls of the demised (dead) till they are handed over to the messengers of Lord Yama.

11. Thus, the entry and exit of Pithrus in the Pithru Loga keep on rotating like a spinning wheel, ensuring that only seven Pithrus belonging to a specific lineage of a family stay in the heavenly abode at any given point of time. Therefore, the stay of Pithrus belonging to a specific lineage of a family in the heavenly world is not permanent.

12. It is stated that crores of Rudras exist in the divine abode and wander in the empty space upto earth, out of which 11 Ekadasa Rudras have been identified as the most powerful Rudras. Rudras in general have terrifying faces; they control the invisible evil souls which wander in the empty space in the form of evil spirits, demons and ghosts.

13. Although it is generally stated that the Rudras have no form and are worshipped only in the form of eleven shiva lingas, Ekadasa Rudras in some forms are seen sculpted in Kailasanathar temple in Kanchipuram in Tamilnadu.

14. Two different stories are found in the Puranas on the manifestation of the Rudras. As per the first story, they were created by Lord Shiva, while the second story states that they were created by Lord Brahma. Since the four Sanat Kumaras originally created by Lord Brahma entered into Gnana marga (path of wisdom) immediately upon their manifestation, Lord Brahma had to release another set of eleven Rudras to protect the souls along with Vasus and Adithyas. Therefore, the Rudras created by Lord Shiva were different from those Rudras created by Lord Brahma.

15. Since humans were created by Lord Brahma, the souls in the universe remain under the custody of Lord Brahma. The souls include those unborn as well as those which deserts the physical body in which they lived. To

ensure that the souls which exited from one's physical body (at the end period of the life of that body) and travel towards Yama loga do not fall into the wrong hands of evil spirits, demons, and ghosts wandering in vast space, Lord Brahma has created a task force consisting of Rudras, Vasus and Adithyas to protect the souls travelling to Yama loga.

16. Who are Ashta Vasus? The Ashta Vasus are believed to be eight sons of Prajapati, the son of Manu. According to the Puranas, the divine Ashta Vasus are the guardian deities of Lord Indira. The word Vasus means space. They are embodied with Vasu specific natural qualities, but the details on them are not known .

17. Among the eight vasus, Vasu called Thara represents the earth, Analan represents fire, Apa represents water, Anilan represents air, Dhruvan represents the pole star, Soman represents the moon, Prabhasa represents the period of dawn before the sun rises, and Pratyusha represents light. It is believed that the souls of the demised (dead) travelling to Yama Loga get protected by these eight Vasus along with Rudras and Adithyas till the Pithru Karmas are completed.

18. Time-to-time Lord Brahma creates thousands of Pithrus as assistant Vasus to render assistance to the main Vasus in carrying out their duties. Among those who assist the Vasus are several lakhs of Pithrus from different lineages of a family, who were earlier in the Pithru Loga. Those Pithrus converted as assistant vasus were meant to identify the souls of the demised (dead).

19. Lord Surya is the leader of the celestials. Twelve Adithyas with specific qualities reside in his rays. Those Adithyas are also referred to as Dwadasiyas (Dvada +

Adithyas). Only those twelve Adithyas release energies from Sun rays necessary for sustaining the life.

20. The souls which travel to Yama loga remain indestructible in that state until the Pithru karmas are completed due to the energies released by the Adithyas.

21. Similar to how assistant Vasus from amongst the Pithrus have been created by Lord Brahma, assistant Adithyas have also been created from the Pithrus to not only assist the Adithyas but also to identify the families to which the soul belonged to.

22. It is therefore clear that our ancestors, are initially turned into assistant Adithyas, assistant Rudras, and assistant Vasus, to identify their respective lineage of souls to ensure their safety until their Pithru karmas get completed.

23. The Rigveda, one of the important texts of Hinduism, states that 'the soul (as said in the initial para the soul is also called as Jeevathma) which leaves the physical body of demised (dead), after completing its journey to yama loga and undertaking punishments commensurate to the karmas carried by them, either reunites with the Supreme Soul, from whom it emanated (to the status of no rebirth) or goes to Pithru Loga as Pithrus'.

24. Advaita opines that the soul (Jeevathma) and the Supreme Soul (perhaps referring to Paramatma) are not different; they are one and the same. It is due to the illusion of maya, Jeevathma or Supreme soul manifests itself in many ways.

25. Dvaitha states 'the Supreme Soul (Paramatma) and the individual soul called Jeevathma are eternally distinct

and separate entities- Paramatma as independent and Jeevathma as dependent. The Jeevathma is a reflection or image of Paramatma, possessing some of its qualities but never its entirety'. Therefore, what it means is that Paramathma and Jeevathma are integrated ones like how the soul and the physical body are integrated.

26. Each soul is governed by birth and death cycle. The soul is eternal, but its stay in a physical body has time line (period of its stay in a physical body before exiting it). They live in one's body only for the period as predetermined by Brahman. At the end of the destined period, it deserts the body to enter into another, not before going through the ordeals destined to it which includes journey period to Yama Loga and stay in Yama Loga.

27. 'Just as one throws away the unusable clothes, similarly, the soul, quits the physical body to turn it into a corpse when the period allotted to the soul's stay in that body expired. Bhagavath Geetha says 'the soul cannot be destroyed by any weapon; it cannot be washed away with water or dried since the invisible soul has no form'

28. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says 'the Jeevathma does not decay; it can never be captured by any description, nor by senses; nor by thoughts, but it is conscious, aware of the acts of the body; it is not separate, isolated but one with the body and senses.'

29. None of us should grieve when the independent soul quits one's body; on the contrary, the Spiritual Masters advice that due Pithru Karma rituals needed for the onward journey of the soul has to be done emotionally in all fairness and dedication as prescribed by our ancestors.

30. Even though the texts in Puranas and Shastras state that the souls residing in a physical body is free of attachments to the body; it is not the doer and is distinct from the actions of the body and mind, the soul is inextricably linked to the merits and sins accrued through the senses and thus carry karmas. That is why each of the soul which quit the physical body take separate births to destroy the karmas carried by them.

31. Whoever takes birth in the universe, the inclusive physical body is bound by the law of destiny; hence, the acts of funeral and post funeral rituals are believed to help the departed souls gain peace and move forward naturally in the afterlife, according to religious beliefs.

32. The after effects of Karmas, birth, death, sins, merits, deeds, and rituals are all parts of a drama enacted by the divine who created the universe. Most of the spiritual bodies/groups and organizations hold the view that the protagonist in the said drama is the Jeevathma.

33. Garuda Purana, the most accepted text in hinduism mentions that the distance from Earth to Yama loga, the realm of the god of death is 86,000 yojanas (or approximately 1,100,000 kilometers). Therefore, spiritual pundits state that the soul departed from one's body need one year to reach Yama loga.

34. As per Garuda Purana at the end of a year's journey, the soul, accompanied by the Yama's attendants called Yama Ganas , will be brought to Yama Loga and paraded before Lord Yama. Twelve Yama Ganas will place before him the accounts of the soul's good and bad deeds, based on which Lord Yama will pronounce punishments to the soul

which carry the feelings, mind, intellect, and ego of the demised (dead).

35. One may ask 'when it is claimed that the soul is formless and invisible, how could it be possible to parade the soul before Yama Dharmaraja? Does it not contradict the basic theory which mentions that the soul is formless?

36. Undoubtedly the soul that quit the physical body remain invisible to the human eyes, but once out from the physical body, they gain some kind of a subtle body called Pretha, carrying the mind, intellect, and ego of the demised (dead). With the newly attained subtle body, the soul is able to be identifiable by the divine agents such as Vasus, Adithyas, Rudras and the messengers of Lord Yama and Pithrus. The souls retain such subtle form, only recognizable by the divine agents in all stages from then on, till they turn into Pithru Gana.

37. There is a reason behind why the souls take the form of Pretha and carry the feelings, mind, intellect, and ego of the demised (dead). The mental suffering of a demised (dead) soul during its journey to Yama Loga can adversely affect the mental conditions of its living descendants.

38. The family members inherit misfortune in the form of heavy emotional and mental stress, health problems, financial difficulties, infertility, or a general lack of peace and prosperity if they fail to perform due rituals to the souls until they reach Pithru Loga. Hence to ensure the Karthas perform their sacred duties, such deterrent had been kept by the divine.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL - 2

Exit routes of Jeevathma from the physical body

39. The soul (Atman) is believed to exit the physical body at the time of death through one of ten gates or orifices in the body leaving traces of moisture which may indicate the path of exit thus allowing the experienced to identify the path through which the soul exited.

40. According to the scriptures, the soul of the demised (dead) quits either through the two eyes, or through the mouth, or through the skull in top of the head (scalp), or through the anus, or through the urethra, or through the two ears, or through the two nostrils. This is the generally accepted theory.

41. The belief in the spiritual world is that soul enters into the fetus in mother's womb through the fontanelle (called as cranium, skull or brain-pan) of the baby getting shaped there. The fontanelle is the soft spot on a newborn's head where the skull bones have not yet fused. Therefore, the common belief is that it will be auspicious if the soul exited through the same path through which it entered which put an end the cycles of birth and rebirth. However, none dispute the theory that there exists ten gateways in the physical body through which the souls exit.

42. If the soul exited through the fontanelle of the demised, they will be considered liberated personalities; hence their bodies are not subjected to cremation and instead buried, subsequently converting the grave into a sacred place called tomb, or mausoleum or shrine and

worshipped there. This however happens rarely and not followed by the families.

43. According to some of the texts in hinduism, Sage Agasthya revealed to the sages like Pulippani and sage Bhoga, that besides the known ten gateways in the physical body through which the soul exits, there are thousands of gateways or orifices such as tiny holes under hairy legs all over the body including hands, feet, and the interspaces between the nails and flesh.

44. When the destined period of time for the stay of the soul in a physical body arrive, the soul quit the physical body and cause cessation of all bodily movement. The Yama Ganas keeping an eye over the body which ceased function will retain the soul for three and a half hours and then hand it over to the Vasus and go away.

45. The reason for retaining the soul for three and half hours is explained in the next chapter.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL - 3

Know reasons for recital of divine chants, singing bhajans near the dying person

46. Traditionally, family members keep chanting Vishnu Sahasranamam, Narayaneeyam etc near dying person or those who are about to breath last after the doctors cease attempts to save the life. Some also recite Rama Nama. Chanting mantras helps a dying person focus their consciousness on the divine. The sound vibrations of sacred chants provide a calming, peaceful atmosphere that reduces the fear and pain often associated with death to those in their last stage of life.

47. It is traditional practice for the elder son to keep the head of the dying person over his lap and chant Panchakshari, Rama Rama, and Shivaya Namah mantras in his right ear for a while. Of all the senses, at the time of death, the ears give out first; hence, this is done first.

48. Some say that Karna Mantra should be recited into the ear of those who is in their last breath. Karna Mantra, according to some pundits was recited into the ear of Karna by Lord Krishna when Karna breathed last. He probably said, 'leave all Karmas; renounce the fruits of actions; renounce performance of your action'. These were Krishna Manthras.

49. In some families, expert pundits are invited to recite mantras like Panchakshari, Rama Rama, Shivaya Namah near those in death bed. Though it is not wrong, the Spiritual Masters opine that the younger or elder son, entitled to perform the last rites , if recite them into the ears of those in terminal death or in their last breath, it will give more solace and mental comfort to those who are in their last breath.

50. Although this practice has been accepted traditionally, supported by scriptures, it is not possible to follow it in the modern days as most of the family members -parents and their sons- reside far away from each other. Therefore, the pundits suggest that it will be suffice if some on in the family place the head of the dying person over their hand, and chant universally accepted sacred simple mantras like Rama Rama and Shivaya Namah, fewer times.

51. It is a common practice in hindu families to sing bhajans (devotional songs), sitting around the person on their deathbed. The waves of the devotional songs induce a

state of peaceful atmosphere similar to the one begotten through meditation. The waves thus emanate from the bhajans gives peace to the brain's emotional feelings of the dying person.

52. Spiritual practitioners, by their experience will be able to feel the subtle physiological changes, such as a weakening of the pulse as an indicator that the soul is preparing to exit the body. They then tell those assembled not to cry since the person on deathbed will be sent to peaceful eternal sleep in seconds; instead, he will advise everyone to keep chanting Rama Nama in chores so that the room will be filled with divinely waves to allow the soul exit the body in a calm atmosphere.

53. Those not in the mood to sing bhajans can constantly keep chanting Vishnu Sahasranamam, Narayaneeyam, Sundara Kandam, chants like Rama Rama, Govindaya Namaha, Govindaya Namaha etc sitting around the one in his last breath. Alternately, the same may also be played through music systems in mild volume since the ancient scriptures have not commented on use of orthodox musical instruments for such purpose.

54. Why is such a practice done? The soul of the person in their last breath will then sleep in peace carrying the feeling that he fully enjoys the support of his family who will perform the karmas due to him to keep him in peace in Pithru Loga. The waves of the chants- Rama Rama and Shivaya Namah- mingle with the thought waves of the soul of the dying person to create an atmosphere of eternal peace, which is derived by meditation alone.

55. The waves of the chants, influences the five major vital life energies present in one’s body such as Prana,

Apana, Udana, Vyana, to facilitate the soul's calm exit from the body through the nostrils. In them, the Prana is stated to be Sun and Apana is the Moon.

56. The soul (atman) moves around the body, accompanied by the five vital energies, called Pranas which are the life force that activates the physical body; therefore, it is essential to recite the mantras in the rhythm prescribed during the time of the exit of the soul from one's body.

57. The purpose of reciting divine chants is to first convert the surrounding environment into a divine state through the power of sacred vibrations which the chants and mantras release through the syllables which has specific vibrational frequencies when recited to keep away any kind of evil spirits.

58. Normally, good and evil spirits of many natures, invisible to our eyes, hover in the vacuum space of the room where the person breathing lay; The evil spirits which are seen as malevolent forces will attempt to take into their custody, the soul which exit from the body of the deceased before taken into the custody of the Vasus.

59. The malevolent forces of evil spirits believe that by keeping the soul under their custody, they can inherit the fruits of the Pithru karmas performed to those souls. However, the evil elements will not be able to counter the power of sacred vibrations which the chants and mantras release; hence they run away from there when mantras are chanted.

60. The Puranas and Shastras state that the sacred vibrations which the chants and mantras release fill the void of the room in which the corpse lay, and the soul, which

exits the body, is immersed in those divine vibrations before commencing its journey to the afterlife.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL - 4

Know timeline for cremation

61. The hindu scriptures (Shastras) prescribe that the corpse of the dead should be cremated as soon as possible- ideally within 10 hours of death; however, few other hindu scriptures emphasize avoiding cremation within the first three and half hours after death.

62. Why did the shastras insist on performing the cremation within ten hours after one's death; the shastras say no evil spirit will be able to enter the airspace around the departed soul up to ten hours; however, the evil spirits will enter into the airspace after ten hours. Once they enter, they may attempt to enter into the body of the corpse to absorb the fruits of rituals performed before cremation. That will cause harm to the family members.

63. The scientific reason too support the theory of ten hours time line given in the shastras for the cremation. When the body is kept for more than ten hours, the body's own enzymes begin to break down the cells and tissues to cause decomposition of the body; soon harmful germs will appear followed by release of foul smell. In ancient period of time there were no iceboxes to keep the dead for several hours.

64. When the time line of ten hours is likely to be exceeded for cremation, then as stated in the shastras, the corpse will be given bath (Cleansing) with a sacred mixture called Panchakavyam which consists of five products

derived from a cow. The components are, cow dung, Cow urine, Cow milk, Cow ghee and curd made out of Cow's milk. Some families may resort to sprinkling Panchakavyam over the corpse instead of giving bathe with it.

65. The scientific finding support the theory of cleansing (bathe) the corpse with Panchakavyam before taking it for cremation. Scientific research shows that Panchakavyam is an antiseptic material and destroys the germs in the body of the corpse, if had formed.

66. Cows are revered as sacred and divine, as they are associated with the divine wish-fulfilling Cow Kamadhenu living in divine abode. The shastras and puranas state that countless deities reside within a Cow's body.

67. Lord Varuna reportedly resides in the urine of the Cow, Lord Agni in the dung, Lord Vayu in the curd made out of Cow milk, Lord Moon in Cow's milk, and Lord Sun in the ghee prepared from Cow's milk. Gayatri Mantra is recited while preparing Panchakavyam. When the corpse is given bathe with Panchakavyam, the deva ganas residing in those sacred materials will drive away the evil spirits if any attempting to come near the corpse. This is the reason why the scriptures insisted on giving a corpse, a purifying bath with Panchakavyam when significant delay takes place for cremation.

68. In certain cases, the son/sons or important relatives of the demised (dead) may not be immediately available for performing the funeral rites due to the `distance in which they lived and it may take more than even twenty hours- beyond ten hours time line given- for them to arrive. In such cases, the funeral will be deferred by family members to allow the son or the relatives to arrive. The body of the

demised (corpse) will kept by embalming it with certain medicines or kept in the ice boxes available for such purpose to protect the corpse from getting infected with insects and flies, which otherwise could harm the body of the corpse and others present in the room.

69. Another example; a person breathed last at 6 am, but the body cannot be cremated within ten hours time line because important people were still traveling. Time ticks away, and the cremation could be done only after 5 pm, or in the next morning. One may ask, in both the scenarios narrated above, will not the evil spirits surround the soul and attack it after expiry of ten hours or cause harm?

70. Shastras have not abandoned such scenario. Anticipating such delays in rare cases, performing of certain rituals have been prescribed to address the evil effects of delayed cremation. If cremation is postponed beyond the time line of ten hours stipulated, atonement ceremonies are to be performed to prevent evils attacking the soul.

71. In the atonement rituals performed, certain specific deities capable of driving away the evil forces are invoked through the chants of mantras. Possessing extraordinary magical powers, those deities quickly appear responding to the power of the chants of the mantras, enter into the atmosphere surrounding the soul and drive away the evil spirits which try to harm the soul.

72. However, if the same atonement ritual is performed before ten hours anticipating delays, then those deities who are capable of driving away the evil spirits will not appear. They will respond to the ritual performed only after ten hours. Such beliefs are based on spiritual beliefs and contents found in scriptures and Dharma shastra.

73. Even by any chance, the soul of the demised (dead) falls into the grip of the evil spirits due to the delay in the rituals performed, the specific deities invoked in the atonement ritual will be able to rescue the soul from those evil spirits and guard them till either the yama ganas or Vasus take over the soul under their custody.

74. What is the sanctity of the three and half period of time line suggested? After the demise of one, the soul deserted the body will not be immediately taken away by the Yama ganas. Although the Yama ganas descend on earth upon receiving the signal that a person is in his last breath, still they wait for a fleeting moment to take control of the soul which was about to exit the body.

75. They wait for the confirmation from Chitragupta, who takes fleeting moment to examine the record and signal that the life period for the stay of the soul in a body had ended. According to the spiritual belief, a fleeting moment on earth is equivalent to three and a half hours time period in divine Loga. Hence, certain shastras have stipulated that the cremation should not take place within three and a half hours.

76. Only at the end of three-and-a-half-hour period and after getting confirmation from Chitragupta, the Yama Ganas will take control of the soul, and hand it over to the Vasus, Ekadasa Rudras and Adithyas.

77. Another reason supports three and a half hour time limit theory stipulated for cremation. Many sadhus, ascetics, siddhas, sages, and spiritual masters remain in the state of deep meditation inside mountains, caves, and unreachable river beds by keeping their breath suspended

for extended periods of time through rigorous practice of yoga and breathing techniques, the state of which is called samadhi; in such time they allow the soul inside their body to freely float in the air, but under their control. In order to ensure that during such period of time the Yama Ganas by mistake do not take the floating soul into their custody and take it to Yama Loga, the three and a half hour time line has been set in the shastras.

78. There are documented instances of people who presumed dead, got back their life mid way while going to the crematorium. Similarly, there were cases where doctors were successful in bringing to life some one who breathed last by giving artificial respiration within a few seconds after they stopped breathing. This is one other reason for the theory of three and a half hours.

79. Before commencement of funeral rites, whether it is before ten-hour time line or after the time line, certain homa rituals are to be performed if a person had died under certain periods of time such as Dakshinayana, the Krishna Paksha, or at night. Those homas (fire rituals), are performed to ensure the departed soul attain peace and undertake a favourable journey. The pundits who perform the death rites will advice which atonement homa is to be performed. If a person however died in Uttarayana, Shukla Paksha, or during the day, no atonement homa is needed to be performed.

80. The donation of land is one of the rituals performed to mitigate the negative effects of dying during the constellations of Poorattathi and Uttarattathi (both are specific stars).

81. Similarly, if one died in the constellations of Punarbhusa, Visakha, and Poorattadi (all stars) one should perform Hiranya Dhana (offering gold).

82. Since gifts of such magnitude can not be offered these days by everyone, to compensate such donations, money is offered to the pundits who perform death rituals as symbolic offering.

83. If some one dies on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, it is considered to be inauspicious as those days are under the influences of certain planets. Since they may cause malefic effects to the family, certain rituals are done or offerings made suitably. This is done in consultation with the respective household pundits.

84. If cremation is done after 6 hours of one's death, then a homa called Paryushitha homa is done. However, if the body is cremated within 4 hours of death (after 3.30 hours, but within 4.00 hours), then Paryushitha homa need not be performed.

85. Paryushitha homa is a vedic fire ritual performed for atonement, expiation, and purification from sins, misdeeds, and negative effects of karma. Paryushitha means old. If the body of those dead is not cremated within six hours, the body is treated as old in spiritual sense.

86. The scriptures and shastras advise that the cremation should be started as soon as possible after death to ensure the soul's attachment to the earthly body gets cut off, lest, it will cause suffering to the soul. Secondly just as we put only freshly prepared food into the Yagna Kund (Homa kund) as oblation, the corpse should not be kept for too long a period of time, but to be cremated within stipulated

hours. Like 'stale food is old food', the corpse kept non cremated for a long period of time should not be offered to the fire which tantamount to offering old food to the fire god.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL - 5

Who is entitled to perform last rites ?

87. The rites performed are of two types. They are called Subhakiri (auspicious) and the other is Aparakiri (Inauspicious). The rituals (final rites) performed on a person after his death are called Aparakiri.

88. In respect of the last rites, scriptures emphasize that only close relatives of the demised (dead) are entitled to perform the last rites.

89. In that order, only the eldest son of the deceased has the principal right to perform last rites to his parents and further rituals connected to it; however, this entitlement is not absolute and if the eldest son is dead or unavailable or unable to perform the last rites, then the next son can perform. If the second son is also not available, then the next son; the list continues thus.

90. In Hindu tradition if strict rule is followed, then, the eldest son has to perform the last rites to the demised (dead) father, while the youngest son is entitled to perform the last rites (burial) of the demised (dead) mother. It is said that this tradition existed because the father naturally has more affection for the eldest son and the mother to the youngest son. However, according to the customs followed in each family, on the advice of the family pundits either the eldest or the youngest son perform the last rites to demised

(dead) mother; nevertheless, only eldest son is entitled to perform last rights of his father.

91. Sometimes it may so happen that sons to perform the funeral rites to the demised may not be available for some reason or the other (meaning they may have been either dead or no sons were born in that family or they can not reach easily). In such situations, according to the dharma shastra and scriptures, the following can perform last rites:

- the sons of the sons (grandsons)
- adopted son
- sons of adopted son
- the grandson of the adopted son
- grandson from daughter who is heir in the family (entitled to the property)
- elder or younger brothers of the departed
- the sons of elder or younger brothers
- the son-in-law (daughter's husband) of deceased
- sons of co wife or third wife if any
- when none were available, the brahmin servant if any in the house can also perform last rites

92. Still further if those entitled to perform last rites refused to perform the rituals due to family disputes, then the last rites to the head of the family (Father) can be performed by the close relatives of the family after taking few sticks of Kusha Grass (Darba Grass) from the hands of the wife of departed (this tantamount to get authorization to perform rites).

93. In the event sons and daughters to perform the last rites to their mother are unavailable for any reason, the husband has to perform the last rites to his wife.

94. The list of those entitled to perform the last rites to the departed souls differ regionally and by caste and community.

95. In families where no sons were available, then the husband of the eldest daughter (Son-in-law) can also perform the last rites provided his father was not alive.

96. However, in modern times as exists today, even the unmarried daughters have begun to perform the last rites to their departed parents in many families.

97. It is interesting to note that none of the ancient hindu texts prohibited women from performing the last rites; in fact, the scriptures permit ladies perform the last rites to their parents. Even Dharma Shastra, a widely accepted hindu text does not discriminate men and women in this respect. However, shastras prohibit married women performing last rites to their parents.

98. The restrictions on women performing the last rites and their role in funeral ceremonies are primarily socio-cultural constructs that developed over time.

99. In the event there was none in the family who were willing to perform the last rites to the deceased, then the chief pundit of the family can perform those rites.

100. In such a situation, certain atonement rituals are to be performed by the available family members as prescribed in the shastras. However, such instances are only rarely seen.

101. As per Garuda Purana, a son leaving his parents against their will to be with a loved one and begot children too is not entitled to perform last rites to their parents since such an act of him had caused mental anguish to his parents. The shastras also emphasize the same principle.

102. If there is none in the family of the deceased to perform their last rites, and they were orphans, those souls, after suffering punishment in Yama Loga become one of the Yama ganas in Yama Loga after undergoing punishments commensurate to the karmas carried by them. Hence several charitable organizations arrange for the funeral rites of the orphans.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL - 6

FIRST DAY : Rituals performed at home prior to cremation

103. The family pundits will advice the actual rituals to be performed for the deceased in one's family as per their family traditions. The rituals and connected mantras chanted in them vary for each gothra and each caste; hence, only the rituals to be followed in general are explained in this article.

104. The Darbha or Kusha grass is considered sacred due to multiple mythologies and beliefs, one of which states that it originated in the sky. Lord Brahma resides at the base, Lord Vishnu in the middle, and Lord Shiva at the tip (top edge). It is believed that the darba grass drives away the evil spirits, purifies the environment and shields the soul of the deceased from getting negative energies; hence, upon one's demise, the corpse is laid over the Darba grass in the hall where it is kept before taking it for cremation.

105. Since Lord Yama is seated in the southern direction, it is customary in hindu tradition to place the head of the corpse facing south during the period it remains at home before cremation. This is not merely a custom, but belief

that the corpse which carried that soul prostrates before Lord Yama to offer its worship. Such act will ensure that the soul taken to Yama Loga by the Yama Ganas will be treated well on way.

106. In the act of next, oil lamp kept lit in the separate pooja room will be put off and door kept closed for the next 12 days of mourning period. This practice is part of a broader set of rituals observed.

107. In many homes, no separate puja room will be there and the deities will be kept nailed to the wall in some manner in some room. Usually, a lamp will be lit in front of those deities every day. They will also be put off.

108. Lighting an oil lamp before the deities is an act of worship and practiced in many homes regularly. It is done to invite the divine presence into the home to bestow blessings. Responding to the prayers, divines visit devotee's home through the light of the lamp lit to bless the devotees. During the period of mourning which is considered ritually impure, typically for 12 days, divines avoid visiting those homes because, evil spirits will be roaming in the atmosphere where the corpse is kept.

109. During the mourning period, when divine mantras (not the mantras chanted by pundits in the ritual) are chanted by the inmates to invoke the deity, evil spirits will interfere with chant and make one to pronounce the mantras incorrectly as the chanter's mind will be weak and unsteady. Therefore, incorrectly pronounced mantras can cause negative effects in the life of those chanting the mantras incorrectly. This is the main reason why for 12 days, the scriptures insist that divine worship should be paused at home where some one had died. Worship is considered

an auspicious act, and it is inappropriate to perform it during the state of mourning.

110. Once some one demised and the corpse kept in the room, a small oil lamp will be kept burning for 24 hours a day, its wick flame facing south. The oil lamp, called Yama Deepa will be burning for 12 days continuously -Day and night- to guide the soul on its transition from the earthly realm.

111. Since the home where one had demised will be under the influence of Lord Yama for the first 12 days after one's death, this ritual is traditionally followed not only to honor Lord Yama, the god of death and justice, but also to pay obeisance to him. It is believed to appease Yama, the god of death which allows the soul a peaceful journey to Yama loga without getting tormented or tortured by the Yama Ganas.

112. There is another spiritual reason for lighting a lamp for 12 days in the room where the corpse was kept. It will help the soul roam freely without stumbling upon anything in the dark. The soul which exited one's body does not immediately go away from the home where it lived, but keep moving freely in the same house for the next 12 days to accept the rituals performed though in the custody and watchful eyes of the Vasus, Rudras and Adithyas.

113. Entire clothes over the corpse will be first removed and the body fully wrapped with a white blanket. From the cloth wrapped over the corpse, a small portion is torn and kept for use in the next ten days ritual, one part of which is called Vasthrothagam. The real purpose or definition of Vasthrothagam is not known. It is stated to quench the thirst of the soul.

114. In some of the families (non-Brahmins) a piece of white cloth will be kept hanging over the body of the deceased (corpse). They believe that the soul which exited from the body will stay over that white cloth until the body is taken for cremation.

115. In spiritual belief, the black colour is Lord Yama specific colour; hence, the body of the corpse is covered with white cloth to remove the fear from the mind of the soul on Lord Yama.

116. However, if the deceased is a young female, then instead of white cloth, some coloured cloth is wrapped over the body of the corpse.

117. If the deceased happened to be a virgin or married woman- still wearing the wedding badge (deceased called Sumangali and whose husband was alive) then the corpse will be draped with green saree, bangles put on her wrist and a garland of flowers put in her hair.

118. Other women wearing wedding badge present there will apply turmeric paste and red vermillion on the forehead of the corpse. The act of married women applying turmeric and vermilion on the forehead of a deceased married woman is a hindu funeral rite. These ritual honors the deceased and her status as a married woman, still wearing wedding badge and showcase that her husband was still alive.

119. If the deceased happened to be a widow, then white blanket will only be used to cover the corpse of hers, and ash will be applied over the forehead.

120. Generally, ash (called veeputhi) will be applied over the forehead of the corpse. Applying sacred ash to the

forehead is a reminder that the physical body is temporary and will ultimately return to ash.

121. The thumbs of both hands and the big toes will be tied together with a small cloth. Both the nostrils will be plugged with cotton wool and closed. The eyes will also be closed. If those customs were not done as early as possible after the corpse is laid on the floor for rituals, It will become difficult to do them because the body becomes stiff (known as rigor mortis) and muscles become immovable.

122. Certain communities resort to community-specific death rites by tying the body parts in eight places with a two to three inches wide loin cloth. In the name of Kai Kattu and Kal Kattu (kattu meaning tying up tightly), thumbs of both the hands and toes of both legs are tied; betel leaves squeezed with a chisel nuts is put in to the mouth to fill it; in the name of Vai Kattu the mouth is closed with a cloth; tying loose muscle together is called Nadi Kattu; in the name of Navel Kattu, a cloth is tied around the abdomen to prevent air from entering the stomach through the navel ; keeping only the face visible, tying a cloth over the hair and around the face is called Tala Kattu; tying the knee joints together so that the body lay in a straight is called Mutti Kattu and tightly putting a cloth around the genitals to hide and support them is called Kovana Kattu. Such knots are also put on the women who have died.

123. Though the shastras have not explained reasons for resorting to Kai Kattu and Kal Kattu, they have been explained in the broader teachings of Dharma Shastra.

124. After the demise of one, while the soul exited from their body keep roaming around the house for 12 days where they lived, the souls which had exited from others

body roaming in the open spaces, too will attempt to join with the souls roaming inside the houses of the deceased.

125. After a person died, his legs will naturally be left open by itself and start to stand apart from each other as all muscles in the body relax completely. Till the knots like Kal Kattu is put to keep them jointed, the legs stand apart leaving the anus at the back wide opened. Before they are all tied with different knots (Kattu) as explained in pre-paras, the external souls which roam in open space may try to intrude into the body through those openings which are potential entry points. In case they succeed, then the fruits of benefits arising out of the rituals performed to the departed soul will all go to the external souls.

126. In such a condition when the body is taken to the crematorium, the external souls which had hidden inside the body of the corpse will come out of the anus before cremation and start roaming around in the graveyard. The sorcerers who will be waiting to capture such souls will, with their supernatural powers, take them into their possession and abuse their energy to gain power or to torment some one for monetary considerations. This is the principal reason why the toes of the corpse are tied tightly within few minutes after one demised.

127. The external soul will not be able to enter the body of the corpse through other gateways such as the ears or eyes or mouth. It can only enter either through the nostrils or through the anus. Hence, the passage of the nostril is closed by filling with cotton and the toes tightly tied together to ensure that the anus remains non penetrable.

128. Once important relatives have gathered, the pundit will begin to perform pre-funeral-rites rituals. By the side of

the head of the corpse, a small yagya kund will be created temporarily using bricks. A Kalash with water will also be placed by its side. The body of the corpse will be symbolically connected to the Kalash with a sacred cord called a Janeu or Yajnopavita, worn across the torso, before commencing the rituals. Once the Kumbh pooja to the Kalash had been completed, Agni homa will be performed.

129. The philosophy of performing the ritual near the head of a corpse is to not only pay respect to Lord Yama but also to symbolically show that the cremation has been performed where the corpse lay and the soul exited from it has been respectfully handed over to Lord Yama.

130. Once the initial ritual is completed, a small fire will be lit in the agni kund kept ready near head of the corpse. Then the body of the corpse will be washed with water by the family members of the demised which is called Abhisheka Pooja as the demised attained the divine status.

131. Before the corpse is taken out for cremation, relatives and friends place wreath over the body to pay respects. Though this practice is not supported by any religious law it is done based on Dharma Shastra which gives the deceased divine status.

132. Whether the deceased was male or female, it is customary in the hindu funeral rites for the daughters and daughter-in-laws of the demised to take head bath; wearing the same wet clothes (without changing clothes and combing hair after bathing) they bring water in a pitcher and pour it over the corpse. Either each one of the ladies will bring water in new pitcher or all of them will hold the same pitcher and pour water over the corpse.

133. Once the ladies complete their task, then the one performing the ritual will apply soapnut powder (Shikakai powder), oil, etc, over the head of the corpse followed by abhisheka with water mixed with rice flour. This practice varies from community to community. In some families' turmeric mixed with water is used for abhisheka. Thereafter another abhisheka will be performed with mixture containing milk, yogurt, coconut water etc. Standing facing west, the Kartha will move backward pouring the abeshega water starting from foot to the head of the corpse. If the corpse had decayed, damaged (died in accidents or other ailments) or in a position impossible to perform abhisheka, then abhisheka water will only be sprinkled over the corpse. Generally, such abhishekas are not performed in the families of the brahmins, who use only sacred water of ganges for bathing the body of the corpse.

134. After pouring water all over the body of the corpse - from toe to head- they place the pitcher in an inverted position near the head, take out water drained from the pitcher and sprinkle it on the same pitcher as well as over the corpse. The water thus sprinkled is considered to be sacred water of river Ganges. Thereafter the pitcher will be moved to the northern side of the corpse. Some pundits compare this ritual with that of Ashvamedha Yagya.

135. Thereafter it is customary for the Karthas (those who will be performing rituals) of the demised to prostrate before the corpse and go out of the room. The ladies will then dry the floor around the corpse by wiping out the water.

136. If the demised happened to be male, then male members will change the dress of the corpse after clearing

out the water from the body of the corpse; however, if the demised happened to be female, then female members will perform the act.

137. New garments purified by sprinkling few drops of sacred water of ganges will then be wrapped around the corpse.

138. While clearing the water and other spills around the corpse, broom should not be used; instead, the water on the floor must be cleared by soaking a cloth and squeezing the water into a bucket as the water is considered sacred like ganges water.

139. The ornaments from the body of the corpse will be removed; as a symbolic process of showing respect to the dead, everyone will prostrate facing south; the rituals will begin with pundits chanting mantras before removing the body from the room.

140. A portion of the cloth wrapped around the corpse -- from the area which covered the foot - will be torn off and used by the one performing the rituals as the shoulder cloth (put over the shoulders of men) till the end of the 12 days ritual . The shoulder cloth thus used should not be changed in between with another cloth. On the 12th day, when the rice balls called Pinda is immersed in the river, the same cloth will also be immersed into the water along with Pinda.

141. After performing abhisheka pooja to the corpse and corpse decorated with new clothes, the body will be brought out of the house and placed on the pre-prepared bier, the feet facing east and the head towards west; the women folks present there will put few grains of rice into

the mouth of the corpse (It is called Vaikkarisi meaning rice for the mouth) before the corpse is carried for cremation.

142. After the ritual of putting rice in mouth of the corpse is completed, the corpse will be covered with a blanket - leaving its face open- and tightly tied together with the bier, four people lift the bier and place it over their shoulders. While the sons of the deceased carrying fire pan lead the procession, the grandchildren of the deceased walk behind the corpse, carrying the torch of fire followed by relatives and friends. A fire pan is nothing but a small earthen pot containing sacred fire known as Agni which is meant for igniting fire for cremation. This ritual, is known as Antyesti (last sacrifice).

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL – 6 (a)

FIRST DAY: Rituals prior to cremation -Reasons

143. The philosophical meaning for the Kartha leading the procession carrying the fire pot is that he lights up the path for spiritual journey of the soul. It is only a symbolic representation to show the soul the path of travel from home to the crematorium/crematory. The soul then travels back with Vasus to participate in the rituals performed thereafter for twelve days before its departure to Yama Loga .

144. The tradition of the male grand children of the deceased carrying the torch of fire is again a symbolic act to not only express their respects to the departed soul, but also to display in public that they are also entitled to perform the last rites to their grand parents. In the absence of the eldest son, the duty of performing the last rites pass

on to other relatives in a specific sequence, which include a grandson.

145. In ancient days, even the grand children of all ages went up to the crematorium to participate in the final rites performed. The shastras insisted on their participation in the funeral rites so that they will also learn how the last rites are performed. However, of late, the younger grand children are not allowed to go to the crematorium as they get frightened by the acts of the rites carried out.

146. The custom that prevailed in ancient tradition was, four closest members in the family carried the corpse to the cremation ground in turns as the cremation grounds were not far away from their places of stay, but also the people were strong enough to carry the corpse.

147. However, if the crematoriums were located at far off distance, since the weight of the corpse would continue to increase as time trickle because of nature's law, the torch bearers would traditionally carry the body on their shoulders for half the distance and then shift the body on to a wooden cart and drag them up to the crematorium.

148. In present days of time, the corpse is taken to to the crematorium by vans. Such a practice has not been prohibited in the shastras, which also did not insist the corpse be only carried on the shoulders up to the crematorium.

149. Carrying the corpse on the shoulders by members of the relatives and friends is a symbolic act of showing community unity and to assure the families of the deceased that they will stand shoulder to shoulder with them in times of crisis.

150. On way, the corpse carried on the shoulder is placed on the ground for few minutes to offer half cooked rice to the corpse. The ritual is known as 'preda bali'. The traditional belief was, such funeral rituals if unperformed can allow evil spirits to torment and torture the soul of the deceased.

151. The philosophical reason for putting few grains of rice into the mouth of the corpse before taking it for cremation is to symbolically show that the soul will remain free of hunger; the relatives also have mental satisfaction that their act will satiate the hunger of the soul. Such practices are followed only as a tradition with no backing from the texts in agamic shastras.

152. Spiritually speaking, the rice plays an important role in any ritual, homa or puja or any other functions. Even in the poojas performed, the puja vessal or pitcher called Kalas are kept on heap of rice. No poojas or homa are performed without use of rice coloured with yellow turmeric. Throwing rice into the homa kund fire is an important part of any ritual.

153. No matter which part of the world hindus reside, as a tradition, they put few grains of rice - but not lentils, wheat, or any other grain - in to the mouth of the corpse before it is carried away for cremation. The rice thus put in the mouth of the corpse burns along with the body when fire is lit on it. This is similar to the rice put in the homa kund fire in yagyas and poojas- the mouth of the corpse considered as yagya kund.

154. According to the scriptures, the rice put into the mouth of the corpse gets converted into some kind of food energies consumable by the souls of the departed which

then pass it on to the seven generations of the family (Pithrus), thereby keeping them also remain free of hunger. This thus paves the way for the families of the deceased to receive blessings from their Pithrus.

155. Generally, a pavilion with a floor cleaned with cow dung is made ready in the houses where the death ritual takes place; cleaning with cow dung reflecting hygiene. This facility is made to enable the relatives who attend the ritual comfortably seated. The front portion will be decorated with the garlands made of mango leaves and flowers. Such a tradition prevailed in ancient days is followed only in rural areas now, due to non availability of space inside the apartments to make such arrangements besides objections which may be received from other residents there.

156. In the house of death, floral designs called rangoli will not be put unlike in normal days, when colorful and auspicious symbols by way of floral designs are laid in the front entrance of homes to welcome the divines who supposedly visit our home daily. Since auspicious events will temporarily remain suspended in the house of the deceased as the homes remain impure till the next twelve days of rituals, no divines will enter those homes until the soul of the deceased departed; hence; therefore, no floral designs are laid for the next twelve days, even after the body has been taken away for cremation.

157. During the period of mourning for twelve days- from the first day of death, no cooking will be done at home by lighting up any medium of cooking. The food for the family is daily received from the houses of the near relatives of those dead. Reasons for the same is given under ''12 days mourning period – Restrictions''

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA -7

First Day rituals: Rites performed in Crematorium

158. Upon reaching the crematorium, the Kartha circumambulate the funeral pyre stacked with firewood, few times as instructed by the pundit. The bier tied with the corpse will be placed over the stage, head facing south. Everything including the waist string (waist rope or girdle) on the corpse will be removed except the bed sheet, allowing the body to remain fully naked below the bed sheet. Before the pyre is lit, the ropes over the corpse are untied and corpse placed on the pyre along with the frame of bier.

159. The final journey of the soul begins with the pundit commencing the funeral rites. The person who performs the karma, circumambulate around the funeral pyre anticlockwise with a pitcher made of raw clay kept over his left shoulder. After keeping the pot near the head of the corpse, the ritual of putting few grains of rice by the relatives and friends present there in the mouth of the corpse and placing gold coin over it commences. This ritual also varies from communities to communities.

160. Once the corpse is placed on the pyre, few drops of ghee will be poured in seven parts of the body such as mouth, right eye, left eye, right nose, left nose, right and left ears. In ancient period of times, small pieces of gold used to be placed over those parts along with ghee, but as time passed, ghee replaced gold as no texts in the scriptures insisted on placing gold on those parts. The reason for pouring drops of ghee over those parts of the corpse during

the cremation ritual is to symbolize transformation of those parts into a sacred yagya kund, or sacrificial altar which purify the fire.

161. After pouring ghee over those parts, once again the relatives and others present there put few grains of rice mixed with sesame seeds into the mouth of the corpse.

162. The Kartha again keeps the same pitcher containing water over his left shoulder and begins to circumambulate the pyre three more times. He also carries a small piece of sandal wood in his hands. While the Kartha keep circumambulating the pyre, another person who also walk behind him hit the pot with a small piece of stone to create a small hole that allow water to fall over the corpse in the pyre. This is called the final sacred abhisheka pooja performed to the divine corpse.

163. Prior to putting the pyre onto flame, five bunches of darba grass will be placed over the head, eyes, mouth, stomach, navel and foot of the corpse and certain ritual performed. They are believed to be essential items intended to purify the departed soul and guide its journey to the afterlife.

164. The Kartha performing the ritual carrying the holed earthen pitcher after circumambulating around the body, will stand facing opposite direction of the pyre and chant 'Om' before placing the sandalwood stick which contains fire over the head of the pyre with the help of some one. Then, he will throw down the pitcher to break it. Carrying holed pitcher around the pyre and finally breaking it to symbolize the release of the soul from the body of the corpse. This ritual also varies from community to

community. In some families, Kartha places the sandal wood stick over the pyre standing facing the pyre.

165. Finally, the Kartha will set the pyre on fire, using darba grass ignited with fire. The family pundit will guide how darba grass bunches intended for putting the pyre to flame are prepared.

166. Uthpana agni: Three bunches of darba grass are made ready for putting the pyre to fire. The term 'Uthpana agni or Utthapanagni' refers to a sacred fire specially prepared with three bunches of darba grass. The three stages of creating fire through Uthpana agni, for putting pyre into fire involves the following. The first bunch of darba grass will be ignited with fire; it will be used to ignite fire to the second bunch of darba grass and finally the third bunch of darba grass gets ignited by the second bunch of darba grass. The third bunch of darba grass thus ignited with fire is used for lighting up the pyre.

167. Once the pyre is put on fire, entire bunches of darba grass will also be thrown into the burning pyre. The Kartha throws away the temporary finger ring made of darba (Kusha grass) grass put on for the ritual, the thread worn around his shoulder etc into the area where the foot of the corpse lay and stay there till the entire body of the corpse goes up in flame.

168. The corpses of male who was widower or female who was a widow will invariably be put to flame only by the ritual involving Uthpana agni.

169. Kapala Agni: Pieces of cow dung cakes will be placed inside a mud baked (terracotta) pitcher which will be fire-heated. By the high degree of heat generated, the cow

dung cakes inside the pot get ignited. The fire thus created on the cow dung cake will be used for igniting the pyre on which the corpse of celibates will be laid. Creating fire in this manner for lighting up the pyre to flame is called 'Kapala agni'.

170. Dushagni: A terracotta pitcher containing a fistful of husk will be heated to high degree of temperature which in turn ignite the husk kept inside. The fire thus created on husk used for lighting up the pyre is called 'Dushagni' and used for cremating the corpse of male who does not have his Upanayana performed (without sacred thread) or to the unmarried female.

171. Ovbasa agni: When one of the married- either husband or the wife- demised, then they are cremated with the fire generated by the process known as Ovbasa agni. Ovbasana refers to a specific mantra upasana. It is devotional worship chanting mantras to invoke specific deity or aspect of the divine. Fire can be generated by the chants of Ovbasana.

172. Unlike in the past, where the body of the corpse was placed on a pile of firewood and put to flame, these days, corpses are cremated in electric cremation chambers fitted with heating coils which generate extremely high temperatures to burn the corpse. After completing the rituals and rites, the body of the corpse is placed on the movable bed of the 'electric cremation chambers' and in a symbolic act, a firewood is placed over the body of the corpse. The bed is then pushed inside the chamber and closed. Extremely high temperature of heat generated inside the electric chamber burns down the body of the corpse to ashes within half an hour or so.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 7(a)

First Day Rituals: Rites performed in Crematorium - Philosophy explained

173. The first reason for performing final sacred abhisheka pooja- allowing water to flow down over the corpse from the hole of the pitcher-is to remove the sins of the deceased and to pave way for the soul to rest in peace. Dharma shastra states that even if a person had committed many evil deeds, he may have also performed few good deeds during his lifetime; therefore, the demised need to be shown respect at least for those good deeds; hence final rites with due respect performed. The act symbolizes immersing the soul in the flow of ganges.

174. The second philosophy is that even if the body is burned in the fire, the soul exited will not be allowed to remain in hunger till it reached Yama Loga; hence, for the next twelve days, food will be cooked in a pitcher and water supplied to satiate its thirst .

175. The third philosophy is that the soul after deserting the body of the corpse temporarily turns into another subtle form called Pretha and while travelling with the corpse to the crematorium begin to experience hunger and thirst. Therefore, to quench the thirst of the Pretha the water is poured through the hole of the pitcher.

176. The rituals performed by the Karthas and others help the soul transition peacefully to its next stage of existence after wholeheartedly blessing the family members for prosperity. The earthen pitcher break when it falls: similarly, our life will come to an end when we break laws of divine.

177. Lord Shiva frequents crematorium and applies ashes all over his body. He is both embodiment of creation as well as destruction when he is in the aspect of Rudra. Hence, philosophically speaking, the body of the corpse when turns into ashes in the crematorium, finally merges with Lord Shiva when he applies its ashes over his body.

178. Similar to a seed which turns into a plant or tree and the fruits plucked from is offered as sacrificial food to the divine, humans also take birth and after enjoying various stages in life, by way of thanks giving, they offer their body to the creator by turning their body into ashes finally.

179. The Yagyas are considered to be sacred ritual in which several materials are put into the fire as oblation. In the same manner the physical body possessing sixteen divine energies/aspects are put to fire on the pyre as oblation. Only when the body of the corpse is put to fire, then the divine energies given by Lord Surya in the eyes, Lord Agni in the mouth and Lord Indira in the hands also returns back to their original bases in divine abode.

180. The shastras tell, 'return the body to the giver'. Therefore, whoever is born on earth, whichever religion they belong to, they will have to return back the body to the giver either by way of cremation, burial or be thrown away to be consumed by scavenger birds (Zoroastrianism).

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 7(b)
Mode of disposal- Burial or cremation ?

181. Once some one demised, his body is disposed off either by putting it on flame of fire or body buried or thrown away to be consumed by scavenger birds in tower of silence.

182. In ancient periods of time, whenever a pregnant women died, the baby inside her womb used to be taken out and buried secretly in their garden before the body of the mother was cremated separately. The shastras states that the unborn should not be put to fire and cremated, but should only be buried.

183. The reason attributed to the burial of the unborn baby is that the skull of the baby is embodiment of divine energies by acts of nature which remains beyond our comprehension. The skull is believed to be the tenth and highest energy center or chakra, the gateway through which the soul enters and leaves the body.

184. The practice of leaving the crematorium after the body has fully caught fire and returning the next day for collecting the ashes is part of long followed tradition. In the event the same practice is followed in the case of new born babies, the sorcerers and wizards, waiting for such a thing to happen will pull out the skull of the baby on flames after everyone left the crematorium and takes it away with them.

185. The skulls of the babies which has immense divine powers will be misused by the sorcerers and wizards to cast curses, hexes, and spells to cause illness, death, misfortune, or causing crop failure, all the bizarre acts for monetary considerations.

186. Hence in ancient periods of time no babies were taken to the crematorium for cremation. They used to be either buried or burnt secretly in their gardens.

187. The reason why buried corpses of the babies were not dug out to remove the skulls is, the divine powers imbibed in the skull of the babies get destroyed once they

are buried. This belief based on tradition has been passed down through word-of-mouth stories over time.

188. When some one met death in a family -whether the death was caused out of suicide, murder or natural death, the family pundit guides the family to perform appropriate ritual needed to honor the departed soul and aid its journey toward liberation.

189. As per the hindu shastras, the corpses of everyone, whether the deceased had committed suicide or met natural death or died in accidents are to be only put to flame of fire and cremated.

190. Rigveda (10.16) states that those above the age of eighteen when demised should necessarily be cremated and their corpses put to fire, but the bodies of the children are to be buried.

191. However, of late, even the bodies of the children are taken to the crematorium and put to flame as the sorcerers and wizards can not take out the body which had been put in a closed, high-temperature, electric-powered furnace or chamber.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 8

First Day ritual: Post funeral rites: Immersion of bones and ashes

192. Few hours after the corpse has been cremated, the cremator takes out the ashes and bone fragments from the chamber and hands it over to the Kartha performing last rites if the body had been cremated in the electric-powered furnace or chamber.

193. However, if the cremation has been done in open air using wooden stacks in traditional manner, it is customary for the Kartha to collect the bone fragments and ashes only the following day, after the body gets completely burnt and pyre cooled.

194. Those (bones and ashes, known as asthi) will be placed into an earthen pot or pitcher containing milk. The pitcher will then be taken for immersion into a sacred body of water, such as a river or the sea. This ritual is called Sanjayana or Ashthi Visarjan. The Kartha and those who accompanied him will take bath there itself and return home. After Sanjayana the Kartha will wear a finger ring made of darba grass (Kusha Grass) after performing a formal ritual. The pundits performing the rites will prepare the darba grass ring and give it to Kartha.

195. As per the texts in the Vedas, the corpse should be cremated and its ashes immersed in the sea or rivers. For those whom such rituals have not been done, the soul disembodied will remain restless in Pretha form, keep hovering over the burnt bones of the body of the deceased in crematoriums. The Pretha form is explained later.

196. Why do the Karthas perform Sanjayana? The basic reason is to ensure that the soul remains free of hunger and thirst on way to Yama loga. While immersing the bones and ashes of the deceased in water beds the river goddess is requested to keep quenching the thirst of the soul by keeping its subtle body Pretha form- moist while it undertakes journey to Yama Loga.

197. One may wonder whether the rivers possess such power. The generally accepted divine philosophy has been

that entire rivers in the earth have been created from the energies of river ganges who is mother goddess of rivers and sea. During ritual, a prayer is placed to goddess ganges that the soul whose bodily parts have been immersed into the water bodies, must take birth and live useful to the universe similar to water which is essential for life.

198. Well off family members usually take the ashes to Kashi and immerse them in the ganges while those who cannot go to Kashi immerse the ashes in any river bed which are believed to be from the divine energies of mother river ganges.

199. Why are the bones immersed in pot of milk? The first food of a newborn baby is mother's milk. The souls of the dead are also destined to take birth as a child according to their karma. Since mother's milk is source of energy to newly born- be it be human or animals- putting bones of the soul into the milk is a symbolic act of feeding mother's milk to keep hem energized till it reached Yama Loga.

200. When bone fragments taken out from the pyre is put into the pitcher containing milk, the soul of the deceased mentally accept the milk as spiritual sustenance. After the bones have been collected thus, the Karthas shave off their beards and moustaches. Some people also tonsure their heads. It is symbolic gesture to show that henceforth in the remaining twelve days, he will perform the karmas to the departed soul cheerfully without remorse.

201. There is another reason for tonsuring the head. As per the cultural and spiritual beliefs, the crematories or funeral grounds are a gathering place for the evil spirits, some of which may be malevolent. They along with the soul of the deceased which manage to temporarily escape from

the clutches of Vasus will try to enter into the hair follicles on head of those who are present in the funeral rites or sit on the hair of the blood relatives of the deceased who may be returning home.

202. Hence in ancient days, it was tradition, that the relatives who had gone to the crematorium to attend the funeral rites tonsured their heads. Even today, in many of the interior villages, everyone in the village tonsures their heads because when someone demised, the entire village participate in the funeral procession and take part in the subsequent rites in the crematorium.

203. When the body of the deceased is taken to the crematorium, the soul which exited the body also travel along with it to directly witness the destruction of the body in which it had resided till then. Once satisfied with the rituals performed, it silently accepts captivity at the hands of the Vasus through Yama Ganas.

204. Though the funeral rituals or rites will end on the first day itself provided the corpse was cremated in electric chamber, in those cases where the cremation took place in traditional manner using wooden stacks, the funeral rites end only on second day. Hence the ritual of laying the stone to continue the twelve-day ritual starts on the third day.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 9

Post funeral rites - Second to twelfth (2-12) day Rituals

205. Let us now understand the post cremation rituals performed during next twelve days after cremation.

206. The ceremonies performed after cremation are called obsequies. Since the rituals/ceremonies are performed to the body of the corpse they are termed as inauspicious rituals.

207. Before the Kartha returned home after completing the funeral rites, the house will be neatly cleaned and kept ready to commence the next twelve days ritual. Once the pundit performs the purification ceremony, the stone laying ritual called Pasana Sthapana will be performed. Pasana means Stone and Sthapana means consecration.

208. A small, clean stone will be installed in a suitable, clean place (leaving half portion showing out) within the complex or where post cremation rituals will be performed. This is done on the first day post funeral rites. The small stone believed to be the resting place for the soul of the departed along with two small yagya kunds will be installed where all the twelve days rituals will be performed.

209. As per the Agama Shastras, if the stone laying ritual -Pasana Sthapana- could not be done on the first day due to unforeseen circumstances, then it will be done on the third day. If the Pasana Sthapana cannot be performed on the intended third day, the ritual can be rescheduled to an alternate day, always on the odd-numbered days such as the 5th, 7th, or 9th day.

210. As per Garuda Purana, the soul which deserted the body of the deceased remains in the space for first twelve days in a ghostly state called Pretha which is formed through the rituals performed by their family. This new body-Pretha-, which is recognizable by celestial beings, is

needed for the soul's journey to the realm of Yama, the god of death.

211. Every day, with the chants of specific mantras, the Kartha will request the pre Pretha soul to enter into the stone installed to accept the offerings made. The purohit who is guiding the Kartha ensures chanting of the correct mantras to properly respect the departed soul and ensure the ritual's efficacy.

212. The daughter-in-law or daughter of the demised take bath where the rituals are performed and as instructed by the pundit prepare the pind (rice with puffed rice) for the rituals. After preparing the Pind, she will clean up the fire stove (meant for cooking) and other utensils and keep them ready for preparing Pind the next day. They will not be used for other purposes till the rituals are completed on all the twelve days.

213. The soul in the form of Pretha which will be under the custody of Vasus, Adithyas and Rudras will be brought to the site where the rituals are held and allowed to temporarily enter into the stone when ritually invited by chants of mantras and accept the rituals performed.

214. During the first ten days of ritual, the Pretha accepts the cooked rice mixed with sessom seeds which is offered to the stone installed in which it temporarily stays. By this, the Pretha begins to shed its ghostly state and turn into Pinda body (lump or mass body, but in subtle form) which can only receive the sustenance; it will be visible and recognizable only by the celestial beings.

215. This ritual will be continued in the same manner, in the same place, for the next ten days after cremation. Only

then on the thirteenth day, Subasweekaram, the auspicious function can be held.

216. Every day in the post-funeral rituals, the Kartha offers water mixed with sesame seed in the name of Vasuothaga and Thilothaga, followed by offering food and other items which help the soul transition to the afterlife.

217. It is stated in the hindu scriptures that when the Pind in the name of Vasuothaga and Thilothaga is continued to be offered by the Kartha in the ritual performed every day for ten days, the soul happily accepts them which in turn cause the soul attain a temporary ever young youthful appearance of a subtle body to feel happy for itself.

218. Everyday each son of the deceased, beginning from the youngest to the elder brother offers the Pind.

219. The water mixed with sesame seeds is poured through bunch of darba grass in the ritual Vasuothaga and Thilothaga.

220. Only after performing Vasuothaga and Thilothaga, the cooked rice called Pind will be offered to the soul along with a tender coconut water to satiate its hunger and thirst. Thus, the rice, sesame seeds, water and darba grass plays important role in this ritual.

221. Since the entire place where the ritual is done turns into temporary divinely abode overwhelmed with divine energies powers, the darba grass, the sacred material is used in that sacred place. The darba grass is believed to have purifying and protective properties that protect the ritual's sanctity from negative forces.

222. The Pind will have to be offered in the same place (same hall of garden) for all the ten days where the ritual

was performed on the first day. After the ritual of offering Pind is completed, again those who performed and attended the Karma will have to take bath before entering home.

223. A lamp is kept burning for 24 hours a day for all the ten days in the place where rituals are done. Animals like dogs and cats should be kept away from urinating and defecating the place. The cooking kund is kept protected by covering it with an old dhoti or saree of the deceased.

224. The ritual Vasuothaga and Thilothaga is kept on increasing each day-three times on the first day, four times next day, five times next to next day and so on till tenth day when the same will be performed twelve times in the name of Ekotra Vritti Shrarddha. It varies from families to families. By this the Kartha offers his reverence, gratitude, and prayers to the souls of the departed.

225. In the same manner, a ritual called Nava Shrarddha will be performed on the odd-numbered days between the first and eleventh day (1,3,5,7,9,11). The Nava Shraddha rituals provide spiritual nourishment and mental peace to the departed soul which is on its journey to Pitru Loka, the realm of ancestors. Rice will be given (Dhan) to the Pundit, each day after performing Nava Shrarddha.

226. Offering the sesame seeds, water, and pinda through darba grass for eleven days allows the soul to gradually develop a new body -subtle body- in the same appearance when it died.

227. This is explained in Garuda Purana thus. The Pinda offered on the first day creates the head, the second day's Pinda creates shoulder and neck.

228. The hands and chest are created by the Pinda offered on third day; the fourth day Pinda creates stomach; the fifth day Pinda creates navel.

229. The sixth day Pinda creates buttocks at the back, the seventh day; Pinda creates the private parts of female and male; the eighth day Pinda gives the thighs.

230. Pinda on nineth day creates legs, while on the tenth day, the full appearance of the deceased gets created in subtle form.

231. After the soul accepts the Pinda given on eleventh day, it transforms the offered food into the food consumable by the Pithrus, sends it to them to absorb the offerings for their sustenance and mental satisfaction.

232. On the eleventh day, when the subtle body is fully formed, the soul is allowed to make final visit to the home where it lived to see and hear the voices of its loved ones and recounts memories of the past.

233. Once the soul calms down at the end of the rituals performed on the 12^{th} day, it is handed over by the Vasus to the Yama Ganas to begins its journey to Yama Loga.

234. The rituals lasting for 12 days are meant to prepare the soul face the punishments in Yama Loga based on the accumulated karma before reaching Pithru Loga. Extra rituals are performed on 10^{th}, 11^{th} and 12^{th} day.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 9 (a)
Second day to Eleventh day Rituals - Reasons

235. In Hindu rituals, odd days are considered auspicious. In the event that the Pasana Sthapana had not been done on the first day and deferred to any other odd day, then the

most important part of the protocol is that all rituals which would have been performed on the missed days must be completed first to ensure that no part of the ritual is omitted due to the delay which took place in Pasana Sthapana.

236. In Hindu tradition Lord Vinayaka (called Lord Ganesha) is traditionally invoked first in any ritual, or auspicious events followed by other deities, reason being Lord Vinayaka is the remover of obstacles and difficulties. The ancient belief was that since number one marks the start of a sequence; the odd number one is considered to be equivalent to Lord Vinayaka. Hence, the karmas, invariably commenced on the odd days.

237. In the past, funeral rituals and subsequent twelve days rituals were performed at home. Therefore, the Pasana Sthapana (installing stone) was also done in the corner of their garden or in a separate room at the back yard of the house. In the modern era however, since most of the families live in the apartments, the rituals are done under the stair cases in basement or performed under a coconut tree at the back if one was available, provided there was no objection from other inmates in the apartment.

238. However, in most of the apartments, there are many restrictions and objections for performing such post funeral rituals, specifically the final, purificatory rites on the 11th and 12th day and therefore, the 12 days inauspicious ritual connected to post funeral rites are performed in rented halls and other such outlets which offer all the facilities to perform 12 days rituals, while the auspicious 13th day function is performed at home.

239. The belief based on agamic shastra is that the place where the Pasana Sthapana was done for post funeral rites become sacred divine abodes like mount Kailash and Indra Loga to the souls exited from the body. The souls temporarily released by the Vasus to take part in the rituals will happily intrude into the stone erected and seated there to accept the rituals treating it as if it was their own palace.

240. The text in the shastras describes a concept where the soul is metaphorically seated on a stone erected for the rituals that serves as a temporary throne. The moment the soul comes out of the stone, its movement is again restricted to the ritual boundary as it is always surrounded by the guardian deities of the souls such as Vasus, Rudras, and Adithyas restricting its free movements.

241. Even then the imprisoned souls keep blessing the families performing the rituals, by wholeheartedly accepting the Pind Dhan given in those twelve days of post funeral rituals.

242. In the halls where the rituals are done, each stone erected by one family remains soul specific to the one departed from the body of their family member, and souls exited from other bodies can not enter into it.

243. Why do the ladies prepare the Pind wearing wet sarees?

244. In ancient days, on all twelve days, it was tradition to perform the rituals near river beds. The ladies who took bath will not find closed space to dry the sarees and other clothes, before wearing them again to cook the pind; hence, they continued the ritual wearing wet clothes. There is

therefore neither scientific reason nor karmic reasons attached to the act of cooking the pind with wet clothes.

245. They were not permitted to carry dried clothes from home to change them after taking bath because the whole house remains impure (also termed here as polluted) for twelve days due to death. Since the ladies travelled from such impure house, they took bath to purify themselves before cooking the Pind.

246. However, some justify such act by citing scientific reason. The death of dear ones causes a temporary rise in body temperature which is activated by the nervous system in times of mental and emotional distress. The scriptures state that while performing any rituals, one has to remain focused on them with cool and calm mind. Since moist body cools down the heat of the body, cooking the Pind with wet clothes have been suggested.

247. This emotional visit on 11th day ritual marks a critical transition before soul's final departure to Yama Loga. The final visit makes it clear that it can no longer get attached to its former earthly life; therefore, it sheds away the feelings of the departed carried by it in the subtle form, and gets ready to take the arduous journey towards the Yama Loga.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 10

Rituals performed on 10th day :

248. On the tenth day, after cremation, various rituals are performed to rest the soul in peace and help the Pithrus of family recover from their grief. The rituals include Nithya Vidhi, Pangali Tharpan (Kuzhi Tharpan), Prabhutha Bali, Bhashana Uththaabanam, Shanti Homam, Ananda Homam,

Charu Sambhavanai, distribution of Appam (name of a sweet dish), Pori(puffy rice kernels) etc

249. The soul stays in the water in the first three days, next three days it stays in fire (Agni) and next three days it stays with Vasus, Rudras and Adithyas. But none of them will be visible to the eyes of humans.

250. On all the nine days, it is brought to earth for the limited purpose of receiving the Pind by staying in the stone erected for its stay and goes back to the space with Vasus. However, on the tenth day it is allowed to stay for several hours to attend all the rituals performed on that day. Hence, the tenth day ritual gains more importance.

251. On the tenth day, the ritual of Vasuothaga is performed 30 times and Thilothaga 75 times .

252. **Kuzhi Tharpan:** Close relatives of the deceased visit the ritual site and perform Kuzhi Tharpan, which is the rite performed for the ancestors. It involves digging a small pit with bare hands and pouring water mixed with sesame seeds into it (For this ritual, seas sand filled ground space is kept ready in the halls where the ritual is held) . As said in one of the earlier paras, the hindu traditional belief is, the life energies of the water poured in the pits, deeply intrudes into the ground and gets mixed with the under-ground water which merges with the water of sea or river flowing underground. The water vapors evaporated from them turns into invisible water energies consumable only by those in the Pithru Loga to quench their thirst by the powers of prayers made in the rituals. All these beliefs are based on the some of the agama and Vedic texts.

253. Therefore, in the ancient days such rituals were performed near river beds or sea beds to ensure that the water energies poured through the pit merges with the underground river or the sea in some manner. However, as time passed, when the ritual was carried out in several other places far away from sea or river beds, the one who performed the said ritual prayed to the Mother goddess of water-ganges, to ensure that the water mixed with sesame seeds used in the ritual quenched the thirst of the ancestors.

254. Recall the Sanjayanam ritual in which the ashes of the body and bones are immersed into the river or sea water beds. Their life energies remain floating in the water for next twelve days. By the grace of mother ganges, the life energies of the ashes of the body, the bones of the deceased and the life energies of the water mixed with sesame seeds poured in Kuzhi Tharpan when merge somewhere in the sea, river sides or water bodies flowing underground, those water energies were able to quench the thirst of the soul of the departed under the custody of Vasus.

255. This is one of the reasons why the shastras insisted on performing the rituals near river beds or sea beds or some other water bodies. Again, these are not based on any scientific research but are purely based on the traditional beliefs based on some spiritual texts, percolated down generations after generations.

256. The life energies in the form of molecules evaporated by the water bodies which contain the sesame seeds mixed water poured by the family members of the deceased, not only keep quenching the thirst of the soul of their families journeying to Yama Loga, but also make them

feel that they (soul) have not been left in distress, but have the support of his family even after death. This is the spiritual philosophy of this ritual .

257. One can question when millions and millions of such life energy atoms float in the space above earth, how will a specific soul belonging to a family identify the life energies of tarpana water offered by the relatives of the deceased from whose body it exited. Even though there are millions and millions of life energies floating in the air in the form of atoms, like magnets, a soul can only attract the life energy atoms emanated from the tarpana water offered by its own family members.

258. This is the grand design of divine. This strange divine act remains beyond our contemplation and is foundational belief in many philosophical traditions and spiritual concepts.

259. During the Tharpan ritual, the water is poured through the gap between the index finger and thumb of the right hand. The rekhas (lines) running in those areas are generally called Pithru bhoomya rekhas (rekha meaning lines).

260. The water which flows rubbing those lines absorb the life energies from those lines and gets converted to life energies in the form of atoms specific to their Pithrus; hence, the souls are able to identify the atoms of the life energies of the water of their family member and absorb them like magnets. It is again based on spiritual and metaphysical belief system rooted in ancient traditions.

261. Pred Bali or Prabhutha Bali :- Pred Bali also called Prabhutha Bali is the ritual of placing half-cooked rice

besides few saltless items like idly, fried balls of some grains, each eleven in nos, and humming bird tree leaves or august tree leaves, a leafy green vegetable etc before the stone (stone erected in Pasana Sthapana) and request the departed soul to accept it when it is believed to be experiencing extreme hunger at this point in its journey. This ritual too may vary from community to community.

262. Prior to above, a single line small rangoli will be drawn before the erected stone; a cloth placed on the ground touching the stone, its head facing south; darba grass will be kept spread over the cloth; all the items as said in previous para laid over it, water mixed with sesame seeds sprinkled over them and prayed for the prosperity of their family. Finally, all the utensils will be washed with sesame seeds mixed water. The ritual ends thus.

263. The food cooked without adding salt, made ready the previous night, will be put by the relatives of the deceased. This ritual is performed to frustrate the soul's heart, which unable to partake them will prefer to stay away breaking ties with the materialistic world. This ritual may also differ from families to families.

264. Taking out the stone:- Thereafter everyone except the one performing the karma will be sent out and gifts by way of money and materials given to the pundits. The one performing karma will close his eyes, pray to the soul requesting it to go to Pithru Loga. The Prasana Sthapana stone will be taken out to signify the completion of the ritual for the departed soul. The Karthas will open their eyes only after taking out the stone from the ground. The act of closing eyes and praying is an expression of deep concentration and devotion. The philosophical reason

behind removal of the stone is to tell the soul that the connection to the earthly plane for the soul has been severed; the soul is allowed to move forward to its new spiritual home.

265. The above ritual is called Bhashana Utthapanam meaning purification ceremony. The stone will be cleaned to remove the mud stuck on it and wrapped in a clean cloth, buried in the pit kept readily dug and then Kartha and others return back to home to take bath after shaving off their moustaches and beard. These are the sequence of purification rituals performed after removal of the stone from the ground.

266. **Yathasthanam** : The soul turns into a subtle body in the size of a thumb after the stone has been taken out and gets ready to go to its place of origin. This next act after Bhashana Utthapanam is Yathasthanam meaning sending back the soul which turns into thumb sized subtle body, to the proper place along with the messengers of Lord Yama.

267. If the wife of the deceased was alive, she should also participate in the Prabhutha Bali ritual. It is a poignant ceremony in which the widow receives a new silk saree from her brothers, symbolizing the end of the intense mourning period. The new saree will be placed over her shoulder instead of giving it in her hand. It symbolizes the end of materialistic life in which she lived and signal to her to enter into a new stage of simpler life as her husband had demised. There is no scientific reason attributed for performing this ritual; it is only to guide the widow to shed materialistic desires, a traditional expectation after her husband's death.

268. Removal of Mangal Sutra (Wedding Badge):- At the end of the tenth day ritual, in the mid of the night, the widow removes her marital decorations, such as Bangles, Sindhoor, and the Wedding badge and hand them over to her brothers. It signifies the end of her marital status and her transition into a new social role as a widow. Her brothers will put them in a cup of milk to purify them. By removing her marital symbols, the widow is symbolically severing the last ties of her husband's soul .

269. In ancient days of time, several restrictions were imposed on the widow. On the tenth day the widow not only remove the martial symbols, but also shave off her head and begin to wear only white coloured or dull light brownish coloured sarees. Thereafter they will never wear coloured sarees or clothes, nor ornaments; nor put a bindi or Sindhoor; nor went out of home for next twelve months thereafter but begin to lead a life of seclusion and austerity. Such restrictions are prescribed in Garuda Purana.

270. The real intention for such acts is to discourage the widows from indulging in the worldly pleasures and instead pursue the path of spiritually devoted until the end of their lives. However, as the time passed, historical changes in the treatment of widows have taken away all the restrictions imposed on the widows who freely act as per their conscience.

271. Ananda Homa:- In some families another ritual called Ananda Homa will also be performed. Those rituals were meant to keep the soul rest in peace and to bring back happiness in the families of the demised. That also marks the temporary end of the inauspicious period which

however resumes next day before performing the eleventh day ritual.

272. Shanthi Homa:- After completing the rituals, the Karthas return home, take bath and perform a ritual in the name of Shanthi Homa followed by small feast given to those who were assembled there. Some eatables like fried rice flakes and a sweet dish will also be distributed to the relatives and friends in the name of charity of the deceased.

273. Vasus, Ekadasaya Rudras and Adithyas are Karma mantra specific deities which safeguard the souls from getting trapped by the evil spirits and gives them protection for first ten days and ensure that the souls remain free of hunger and thirst.

274. Why the time line of ten days have been set is, Yama Dharama takes takes ten days time to analyse the good and bad deeds of the soul of the deceased to take some decision on the punishments to me meted out .

275. Even though the soul goes into the custody of the Yama Ganas from Vasus, Ekadasaya Rudras and Adithyas at the end of the tenth day rituals, the Yama Ganas will allow the soul to take part in the rituals held on 11th and 12th day.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 11

Rituals performed on 11th day :

276. Ekodhishtam: The ritual performed on the eleventh day is called Ekodhishtam, which is a shraddha ceremony (ceremonial offering) meaning ritual performed for one demised.

277. The ritual is also performed to help the soul transition from the earthly plane to the realm of the ancestors (Pitru-

loga). Until the eleventh day, the soul is considered an earthbound Pretha. Some of the rituals involved in it include:

- **Yajnopavita Dharana:** After taking bath the Karthas remove the old thread worn by them during the Karma in the last ten days and wear fresh one.
- **Punyavachanam:** This is a purification ceremony involving chant of several mantras to cleanse the home and bless its inhabitants for good fortune, peace, and prosperity after the post funeral rituals have been completed.
- **Nava Shardha :** The nine types of gifts offered through a ritual with chants of mantras on behalf of the deceased is called nava Shardha. The offerings are believed to nourish the soul during its journey to the court of Yama, the god of death.
- **Vrusha Uthsarjanam ::** Vrishabha means a bullock and Uthsarjana means to set free. This ritual is done to free the Pretha body of the soul from the universe and to send it to Pithru Loga to join with them. In this ritual a trident like mark is put over the body of a bullock calf and the same offered to some one so that the soul of the deceased does not retain its ghostly body.
- **Ekadasa Brahmana Bojana:** Offering feast to eleven Brahmin priests.
- **Adhya Masika:** This ritual is also done to help the deceased's soul transition from a restless ghost (Pretha) into a revered ancestor. Performing the ritual is an act of duty (dharma) and faith (shraddha) to help their ancestor find peace. This ritual also relieves the agony of the family members of the deceased and bring back happiness.
- **Meal for one person:-** This is called Oththan food**,** oththan meaning one person. This is another important

ritual that takes place on the eleventh day. On that day, a pundit called Oththan (One man) will be called to prepare unsalted and simple food there, eat it and leave without looking at any one.

- The avoidance of salt and other flavorful items in the food prepared by him reflects the family's state of sorrow and separation from worldly pleasures. He will be given dakshina (a charitable fee or gift) for it before he begins to prepare food.
- No one should see him when he leaves. He is called Pretha person. The pundit eating the saltless food and leaving without being seen by anyone symbolize the Pretha relieved from its hungry ghost state.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 12

Rituals performed on 12th day :

278. 12th day ritual consists of Punyavachanam, Ovbasana, Sodaga, Sabindikaranam, Sodhasakumba and giving charities etc. All those rituals are also performed to help the soul of the deceased transition into the afterlife. Giving a water pot made of vessal as gift to the pundit is known as Sodhasa Kumba Shardha and it is meant to quench the thirst of the soul of the deceased and involves sixteen (Sodhasa) rites.

279. Punyavachanam: This is a purification ceremony involving chant of several mantras to cleanse the home and bless its inhabitants for good fortune, peace, and prosperity after the post funeral rituals have been completed.

280. Sabindikaranam :- During this ceremony, pindas (rice balls) are offered. Three Pindas of three ancestors will

be first offered and then they will be mixed with the Pinda of the deceased praying that the soul of the deceased join with the three ancestors at some point of time.

281. This ritual can be performed either on the 12th day or on the 15th day or after six months, but should be performed without fail. Till the ritual of Sabindikaranam is performed, the Karthas should not take part in any auspicious functions. Only after performing Sabindikaranam, the soul will shed its Pretha body. After performing Sabindikaranam, shardha for the demised mother, and three ancestors from father's side is performed.

282. The soul which shreds the Pretha body does not immediately reach any realm in divine land. The journey takes one full year after the rituals have been completed on 12th day. On the way the soul is allowed to rest in sixteen places; hence, within one year sixteen Sodhasakumba Shardha is done to ensure that the soul which will be rested in sixteen places on way to Yama Loga remain free of hunger and thirst.

283. In the event the sixteen Sodhasakumba Shardha could not be completed on specified periods of time, before the end of one year all the sixteen Sodhasakumba Shardha is to performed on any specific day as guided by the family pundit. Unless the same is performed, it is believed that the soul of the deceased will remain agonized before reaching Yama Loga; it will cause doom to the family members by way of hurdles and unwarranted issues disturbing peace at home.

284. Since it may not be practically possible to complete sixteen Sodhasakumba Shardha on a single day, on the 12th day of the ritual, sixteen pundits performing the ceremony

will be offered dakshina and suitable gifts to their satisfaction. Besides offering gifts and Dakshina to sixteen pundits, one more Brahmin will be well fed at home and suitable Dakshina given.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 12(a)

Rituals on 12th day -Reasons

285. It is stated that the soul is offered Pind along with sesame seeds mixed water for 11 days which it accepts and consume. When it is the fact that the soul has no physical body, how would it consume them? Does the statement not contradict with each other. Only after we physically consume some food, which enters into our stomach, the feeling of fulness satisfy our hunger. All of them are connected to physical acts. But the soul in subtle body can not physically consume any food, nor drink water. Therefore, the mantra waves released by the chants when converts the Pind along with sesame seeds mixed with water into some kind of food energies consumable by the subtle body the invisible souls absorb them to satiate their hunger and thirst.

286. The pundits use darba grass and sesame seeds due to their specific sacred and energetic properties. The white sesame seed is believed to have originated from the sweat of Lord Vishnu and the black sesame seed from Varaha Murthi, another incarnation of Lord Vishnu; hence, both are useable and considered to be most sacred.

287. It is stated in the shastras that only when the sacred items like sesame seeds and darba grass are used in the post funeral rituals, the soul ultimately finds a place in Vaikunda, which is the heaven.

288. It is believed in hinduism that trinities- Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva reside in the darba grass which has originated from space above earth. In view of the presence of the three Lords in the darba grass, the invisible evil spirits can not stay in the places where it was present; hence, the sacred darba grass is used in the rituals to drive away the evils who attempt to enter.

289. Darpa has a magnetic force of unknown magnitude, which gives life energy to those who hold it in their hands. The belief in the Vedic and Hindu traditions, is that a person loses life energy during the period of performing the rituals and darba grass reinstate it. The glory of Darpa is also mentioned in the Vedas.

290. As per the belief based on shastras, if we fail to perform the twelve days rituals , the souls of the deceased will not quickly reach Pithru Loga and will be wandering aimlessly with broken heart after getting due justice from Lord Yama. If they are agonized, it will spell doom to the families concerned.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 13

Rituals on 13th day

291. While the first twelve days rituals are meant for the deceased, the thirteenth day, ceremony which is auspicious marks the end of mourning of the families of the deceased. The inauspicious rituals thus end with auspicious note. The thirteenth day ceremony also signals that the peaceful journey of the soul to join seven generations of Pithrus in the Pithru Loga after getting due justice from Lord Yama

based on the individual's accumulated karma (the sum of their good and bad deeds).

292. Subasweekaram:- On the thirteenth day Subasweekaram will be performed to purify the atmosphere at home. The ganges water will be sprinkled in all the rooms to sanctify home. It is tied to the belief that the departed soul has transitioned, and the living family members can now move forward to lead life of normalcy.

293. The other rituals held are **Navagraha Homa** and **Shanthi Homa**.

294. In the evening the Pundit narrate the story of how Jeevathma travels after death; the meanings of the rituals done; the story is based on Garuda Purana.

295. In the evening everyone of the family members visits some temple and worship for the happiness and well being of the family.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 14

12 days mourning period - Restrictions

296. There is an intense period of mourning immediately following the death of one in the family which lasts for twelve days. During this time, because the family of the deceased is considered impure or non-sacred, they are bound by several rules of behavior.

297. Based on the texts in agama shastra, every family in whose home some one had demised observe twelve days mourning period period- inauspicious period- since they are required to perform inauspicious rituals (the act of making something ceremonially impure) to the departed soul.

298. The twelve days of rituals are meant to peacefully allow the soul reach Pithru Loga to join with souls of its seven generations Pithrus present there. During the period of mourning no family cook food in their home for a specific period- 12 days- following a death

299. In ancient period of time, people used to cook food by lighting up the cooking stove using fire wood and cow dung cakes. In crematorium too, only the fire wood and cow dung cakes were used for both cremating the body of the corpse and in the next 12-day rituals lighting up the homa kund and stove to cook pinda etc. Therefore, the shastras prohibited lighting up the cooking stove with any medium like fire wood or cow dung cakes as lighting up fire in cooking stove is considered inappropriate till the funeral pyre is lit to burn the corpse and subsequent 12 days of rituals were completed.

300. Therefore, food for the family used to be daily received from the houses of near relatives and friends of those dead.

301. Unlike the rituals performed today, in ancient period of time it took many hours to complete the karma since several mantras are to be chanted for each step in the ritual. After completing the rituals, the Kartha and his family members have to take bath before doing anything. In the homes where children and elders were present, they can not remain hungry for long hours waiting for food to be cooked after completion of karmas. Therefore, the near relatives brought food and fed them on humanitarian grounds.

302. Abstaining from cooking is a sign of respect for the deceased and acknowledges that the family is in a state of

deep grief and emotional distress. In ancient period of time, after cooking food it was tradition to put few grains of cooked rice into the fire in the cooking medium to offer it as oblation to Lord Agni. By offering the first portion of cooked rice, the householder was performing a smaller, everyday version of yagna in their kitchens. Since no poojas or yagnas invoking divines are to be done during mourning period of 12 days, lighting up any cooking medium has been prohibited in the shastras.

303. However, these days in many families they use electric heaters and microwave ovens to make coffee or tea. They justify their act citing use of electric geysers to heat water for bathing.

304. Why the period of 12 days is treated as inauspicious is due to the fact that the family members of the demised remain in state of grief and frustration and it takes time for them to come back to normalcy. During the period of grief, their nerves system becomes weak; frequent crying in remembrance of the dead further weakens them bodily and mentally; therefore, they needed mental rest and peace to forget the sad event.

305. The family's state of grief and frustration may have been taken as the central reason for the shastras to prescribe the rituals lasting for 12 days as inauspicious. The period of 12 days may have been perceived as the structured time for the family members to come back to normalcy and for emotional healing.

306. As the family members keep performing the inauspicious rituals, which can not be avoided due to tradition and moral fear, they slowly return to normalcy as visitors too avoid visiting them to offer condolences in

person during the days the rituals are performed. The family members of the deceased also can not happily welcome them nor speak to them normally.

307. However, the shastras may not have prescribed the period of mourning -12 days- as inauspicious in a purely negative sense since few scientific reasons are also attributed for restricting the visitors in ancient time to visit the families where death had taken place. We must remember that the ancient period sages and saints were highly knowledgeable in all fields of life.

308. Normally some germs form in dead body, especially if the demised was diseased; some of the germs in them may be flying in nature. Limiting contact with the household where the death has taken place during the 10–12 days period may have functioned as an effective quarantine to prevent the spread of potentially contagious diseases through those germs. Therefore, the restriction to visit the house where death had taken place may have been prescribed in the shastras for 12 days, terming the period as inauspicious.

309. In ancient periods of time, those who performed karma used to go to the crematorium every day to perform ritual for twelve days since the Prasana Sthapana took place there. That allowed possibility of some poisonous germs and impurities sticking to their bodies. When the Karthas unknowingly brought such poisonous germs home, those germs spread everywhere in the house. Even though the life span of those germs was limited to 10 to 12 days which is one of the divine miracles, the possibility of them getting struck to the visitors was high. Therefore, the homes where death had taken place was treated as impure, inauspicious

and unclean for 12 days to discourage visitors visiting there. Hence the shastras insisted on the visitors to take bathe and wash their clothes after leaving a house of mourning to prevent virus germs transmitted from the body of dead if the person was diseased.

310. However, all those germs die from the smoke released from the homa kund which fill the home on the thirteenth day when Subasweekaram is done. Reason being the smoke that rises from a homa kund contains powerful healing energy; the ingredients selected for the homa contain excellent properties which kills the germs of several types. Some studies suggest that smoke from certain ingredients used in a homa or haven may have antimicrobial properties. The antimicrobial effect persists for up to 24 hours after the ritual was performed. They cleanse negative energy, remove impurities, and create a spiritually elevated atmosphere.

311. Besides, there is another spiritual reason given for observing the twelve days period as inauspicious. During those twelve days, the soul of the deceased is allowed by the Vasus to visit the home where they lived after coming out of the stone installed to accept the offerings of food there. If the soul finds their family members and other relatives in happy mood, they will feel pained and heartbroken.

312. The vibrations from the happy moments of the relatives and friends when saddens the soul will prevent it from accepting further ritual offerings wholeheartedly; when the souls reject the offerings which may not be visible outwardly, the silent pain and sorrow suffered by the soul can manifest as a curse upon the family which in turn cause

immense suffering to the family in the form of ill luck, disharmony and misfortune in many ways.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 15
Monthly and yearly Shraddhas and Tharpan

313. As per Garuda Purana, the soul which is in the form of a Pretha, descends from the sky to partake the food offered especially on the 11th and 12th days rituals in the earthly plane. The food partaken on those two days gives the Pretha enough energy needed for its onward journey as the Yama Ganas tie the soul with a rope and drag it away to Yama Loga.

314. As per Garuda Purana, during this journey, the soul keeps looking back at its former home and family. Unable to communicate with them it keeps crying, as it walks with the Yama Ganas. The travel is non stop, each day covering a distance of 247 kathas per day (One Katha is stated to be 16 Kilo meters distance) The hunger and thirst for the Pretha are directly imparted by the rituals performed for it by its family members in earth plane.

315. The path of Pretha's travel to Yama Loka is determined by the karmic deeds earned by the body in which it resided; while righteous deeds gives the Pretha easy journey, sinful acts endure a long and arduous path filled with suffering. Therefore, different types of Prethas travel in different routes based on their karma.

316. One may wonder how would the Pretha walk as it has no physical body. Similar to the path of travel available in earthly plane for humans, paths are also available in the

cosmic too for Pretha's to walk. It may not be visible to the human eyes, but they walk on them.

317. These being divine law as stated in Garuda Purana, the karmas, rituals etc performed sincerely by the families of the departed souls greatly help the Prethas to reduce the intensity of the difficult path they had to traverse, at least until they reach Yama loga, in a peaceful state of mind.

318. The sincerity with which the Karmas and rituals are performed for an year by the families of the Pretha travelling, is in a a way appears as an appeal to Lord Yama to show mercy to the Pretha; besides the effects of the vibrations of powerful mantras recited in them pleases Lord Yama who then order the Yama Ganas not to ill treat the Prethas on way and ensure that the Pretha remained freed of hunger and thirst.

319. The Pretha tormented with hunger and thirst is allowed to stay in a place, once a month, on the day of its death, which is called as its lunar date (Thithi). Hence, on the day of the lunar date of the demised, which appear every month, the Kartha offers Pinda Dhan which is a ritual performed. Thus, the Thithi performed in the next 12 months symbolically satisfy the Pretha's immense hunger and thirst besides help in its spiritual journey.

320. A tithi is a lunar day. There are 15 tithis in the waxing cycle of the moon (shukla paksha), and 15 tithis in the waning cycle of the Moon (Krishna paksha) each day controlled by specific deity. Tithi is important for Shrartha because it's the specific lunar day on which a departed ancestor passed away, and performing Shardha on that particular tithi ensures their souls receive nourishment,

peace, and liberation (Moksha) in the afterlife by the blessings of the controlling deity of the day.

321. It takes a year for the Pretha to reach Yama Loga; hence, adhering to the shastras, the family members refrain from attending any auspicious event, festival or perform auspicious ritual for the next one year after the demise of their family members.

322. Tharpan: The family member performs the ritual called Tharpan, which falls on every month. The primary objective of Tarpan is to satisfy and gratify the ancestors who are in the form of Pithrus; seek the welfare and well-being of themselves.

323. During one year after one's demise, the family members will not attend to any Pujas, homas or other auspicious rituals i.e. until till the first year shardha ceremony gets completed. Even after a year, on the day the Tharpan no daily pooja is to be performed at home till Tharpan is completed; however, after completion of Tharpan, the daily rituals/poojas should be performed without fail, after taking bath. This will help in receiving the blessings of the ancestors.

324. As per Dharma shastra, on the day of Amavasya when the sun is in conjunction with the moon, the Pithrus remain more thirstier and hungrier; hence, the Tharpan is done with black sesame seed and water, combined with sacred mantras to satiate them which in turn beget their blessings.

325. The traditional belief is, on the day the Tharpan is done, the Pithrus visit their homes and stand near the doorstep to receive the water mixed with black sesame seeds.

326. It is stated in the shastras that in the event the Tharpan is not done by Karthas for any reasons, the Pithrus will go back disappointed and agonized with hunger and thirst. Therefore, those who could not perform Tharpan if offer green grass to the cows, it will satiate the Pithrus.

327. Three Amavasya is sacred in a year. The one falling in January (Thai), July-August (Aadi) and the third one in Sept-October(Purattasi). The fifteen days in the month of Purattasi(Sept-October) is called Malaya Paksha. As per the texts in the shastras, during Mahalaya Paksha, also called as Pitru Paksha, the ancestors reportedly visit the homes of their descendants to bestow blessings of health, wealth, knowledge, and longevity upon their family and then goes back. Therefore, Tharpan rituals performed during the period of Mahalaya Paksha is considered highly auspicious and sacred.

328. Tharpan performed in certain temples, rivers, and the sea are considered to be more sacred. It is best to perform Tharpan in places like Thiruvalangadu, Thiruvallur, Rameswaram, Thirumayam, Aranmanipatti, Thiruvannamalai, Thiruvidaimaruthur and Thirunallar in Tamilnadu and Kashi and Gaya in Northern India.

329. Above all, performing Tharpan in the town of Thilatharpanapuri (located between Tiruvarur and Poonthottam) in Tamilnadu is considered highly sacred because both Lord Rama and Lord Lakshman performed Tharpan to their father King Dasharatha, besides divine bird Jatayu, whom they respected like their father.

330. The shardha ceremony and Tharpan are performed to appease our ancestors and seek their blessings for the

family members. Hence one should perform them without fail.

331. Masikam: It is a ritual performed once a month by the Kartha in the first year of one's demise. In this ritual, the Kartha offers food and water (Pind) to the Pretha of the departed soul to aid the soul's journey to the next realm and to take good re-birth. The date on which Masigam falls in each month is based on the Lunar date (Thithi) of the demised.

332. Strangely some time two Lunar dates fall in the same month, hence, the Pundits opine that 16 Masikam are to be performed in the first year after one demised.

333. In some of the families, the Karthas perform Masikam once in six months due to their family circumstances; however, performing in such a manner is not allowed in shastras.

334. Shardha Ceremony: Shardha ceremony is performed in honor of the demised ancestors, express gratitude, and facilitate their peaceful transition to the afterlife. It is performed to appease the soul of the demised to remove their sins in the first year. It is performed on a specific lunar date (Thithi) of the ancestor's death to beget their blessings; it also brings prosperity and peace to the family members.

335. Based on the lunar date (Thithi), sixteen shardha ceremonies are to be performed to the demised in the first year. They are also termed as Ekodhishta shardha ceremony. It also ensures that the sixteen divine aspects in the body of the demised reach the realm of heaven. Those Shradhas are

also called Oona Masika, Una Apthika Masika, Tripatshika Masika, and Monthly Masika.

336. In the same manner how the Pithrus visit their homes and stand near the doorstep to receive the water mixed with black sesame seeds on the days when Tharpan is performed, Pithrus visit homes even on the day the Shardha Ceremony is performed to receive the food offered to them.

337. The shastras state that the Pithrus who visit our home on the days when Shardha Ceremony is performed stays with us for three days. In the ancient period, the Karthas used to perform a ritual called Una Masikam, one day before actual Shardha Ceremony was performed. The Pithrus therefore visited homes on the day of Una Masikam, attended Shardha Ceremony and then stayed back on the third day before going back.

338. Parvana Shardha: Shardha Ceremony has many versions. The Parvana Shardha is done in which a fire ritual is performed requesting Lord Agni to carry the offerings to the ancestors. Then rice balls often mixed with sesame seeds, are offered to the previous three generations of ancestors to help their souls attain peace and liberation. Two Pundits who performed them will be well fed with feast and dakshina given to their satisfaction.

339. Sangalpa Shardha : The ritual of performing Sangalpa Shardha which is a simplified alternative to the more elaborate Shraddha performed and involves only offering of food and dakshina to two Pundits. No Homa is performed, nor Pinda dhan given.

340. Aama Shardha: The third type is called Aama Shardha. This is also another simplified alternative to the

more elaborate Shraddha performed. Two Pundits will be invited on the day of Shardha and given enough money to purchase groceries for home, besides, separate Dakshina to please them.

341. Hiranya Shardha: The fourth Shardha is known as Hiranya Shardha which is another simplified alternative to the more elaborate Shraddha performed. In this ritual, two Pundits will be invited on the day of Shardha and they will be given two pieces of raw plantin, enough rice besides Dakshina.

342. Those who can not afford to perform any of the above Shradhas can simply perform Tharpan with water and sesame seeds praying Pithrus to bless them.

343. While performing Shardha rituals, when the clan, name, star, and date of death of the deceased ancestors are recited with mantras, the chants of the mantras convert the offerings made to the Pithrus into life energies consumable by them which is not visible to our eyes.

344. In light of the above, the concerned Pithrus belonging to those families are only able to accept and consume the pindas given by their karthas. Pithrus belonging to other families can not even touch those life energies which belonged to other families. This is one of the divine miracles which stand beyond our contemplation.

345. Sometimes it may so happen that the shardha ceremony of father and mother fall on the same day though they may have demised with a gap of few years. In such eventuality first the shardha is performed for father and then only mother's shardha will be done on the same day, separately cooking for each shardha.

346. Another peculiar situation arises in which the yearly Tamil/Telugu/Kannada or other regional new year function; parents Shardha also falls on the same day. In such situation, the new year function will be celebrated first, followed by the shardha ceremony.

347. Dharma Shastra says that those who are sick or unable to perform shardha due to physical disability can perform the shardha ceremony with the help of others who can perform them.

348. Even if the brothers stayed next doors, they will have to perform the shardha of their parents separately. In joint families the younger brothers will have to remain seated by the side of their eldest brother throughout the shardha ceremony performed.

349. The shardha ceremony for the parents both of whom died in an accident will be performed together without taking into account who died first. However, the cooked food offered as oblation in the ceremony will have to be kept in two separate utensils.

JOURNEY OF JEEVATHMA- 16

Periods of mourning for different kinds of death:

350. Those in whose home death has taken place, family members belonging to those homes should not visit the home of another in whose home too death has taken place for a period of 31 days (till one-month rituals are completed). This is a tradition followed based on the texts in shastras.

351. The periods of mourning which results in impureness or inauspiciousness to the families have been divided into several groups. They are: period of inauspiciousness goes away after taking bath, Pakshini period of inauspiciousness which is 1½ days period of time, One day inauspiciousness, and ten days inauspiciousness. The inauspiciousness refers to the period of mourning or impurity in the home of dead.

352. Even if some one in a family met death in accident or unnatural mode, the relatives of the family observe certain period of mourning. However, the rituals for such deaths are performed on delayed schedule something like, after 6 months or after 24 days, as per the tradition observed by different communities.

353. The family members or their relatives need not observe mourning or perform Tharpan for those who die by suicide since no traditional rituals exist for those who meet unnatural death. It is stated that unlike standard death rituals performed for the soul's liberation, an unnatural death necessitates more complex ceremonies to prevent the soul turn into ghost like status.

354. If a sanyasi met death, no mourning is to be observed by his original family members nor to the parceners. The mourning period or impureness of the family members goes away upon taking purificatory bathe on hearing the news.

355. If some neighbour had died, whose home lay within a distance of 88 feet, it is customary for the neighbours to avoid cooking and eating in their homes until the deceased body has been removed for cremation.

356. If one ate a meal in the home of dead during the period of mourning, the shastras prescribe period of ritual

impurity to them for the next 31 days, in which period of time they should not visit any temples or take part in auspicious rituals.

357. The shastras prescribe that an individual who has performed shardha ceremony in their home should not visit a house of death of another family member or friend on the same day after performing shardha ceremony, to offer condolences.

358. Similarly, during the period of mourning, family members do not attend any auspicious rituals of any kind held in others home or in public places.

359. During the period of mourning, impurity or inauspiciousness the members in the houses should not even prostrate to any elders- howsoever older they may be- for any reasons, which is considered as auspicious. This tradition is observed as a mark of respect to the departed soul in that family.

360. Those who are in the period of mourning due to death, should not touch the person who is also in the period of mourning due to death in their home. In such a situation, both will have to take bath to remove impurity occurred from each other.

361. Those who visit the home of another to offer condolence who is in the period of mourning on account of death in their family, after returning home should enter their home only after washing their legs outside and then immediately take bath and wet all the clothes they were wearing/carrying with them. Till then they should not touch any other things at home. These are rituals of purity

prescribed in shastras after visiting the house of a dead person.

362. The entire male members in a family right from father to sons, sons of sons (grand children), their sons (great grand children), their sons (great great grand children) in the order of seven generations are collectively termed as paternal side Parceners/ Co-heirs

363. All the members in the first seven generation (parceners) family have same period of mourning on account of the death of any of the male members in any one of those seven parceners families.

364. However, those in the eighth generational families (parceners) will not have mourning period if anyone died in the first-generation family. The seven generation for the eighth generation begins only from the second generational family members. Similarly, the first-generation family will not mourn the death of any member in the eight generation.

365. The first generation to seventh generation is one set of parceners; the second generation to eighth generation is another set of parceners; the third generation to nineth generation are another set of parceners and the seven generation members termed as parceners goes on in this manner.

366. Let us understand it better. Supposing in a family, 10 generational parceners were alive. They were in the following order. Gopalan, Krishnan, Madhavan, Vasudevan, Chakrapani, Uppili, Raman, Nandan, Ramesh and Mukundan. Which family members are parceners who observe mourning periods alike?

367. 1st Group Parceners: Gopalan, Krishnan, Madhavan, Vasudevan, Chakrapani, Uppili and Raman are parceners.

368. 2nd Group Parceners : Krishnan, Madhavan, Vasudevan, Chakrapani, Uppili and Raman

369. 3rd Group Parceners : Madhavan, Vasudevan, Chakrapani, Uppili, Raman, Nandan and Ramesh

370. 4th Group Parceners : Vasudevan, Chakrapani, Uppili, Raman, Nandan, Ramesh and Mukundan

371. In the death of some one below seven years in a family, as per the rules prescribed in the shastras only the particular family will observe mourning for 10 days. The parceners do not have mourning period on account of the death of anyone below seven years in their seven generational families.

372. In the event the members in the family tree have not met or spoken for seven continuous years, then in the event of the death of any one in any of their families, the other members do not have to observe mourning at all; simple purificatory head bath is sufficient. However this is only a traditional practice observed and not based on any doctorine prescribed by the shastras.

373. If a death occurs in the family, till the first year shardha ceremony gets completed, no auspicious event including marriages will be performed in the family. The auspicious events begin by performing puja rituals in a temple next day to shardha ceremony.

374. However, this restriction exempts prefixed marriage functions. The shastras say that the pre arranged marriage functions can continue uninterrupted. However, if some death had occurred just 15 days before the marriage, the

marriage should be postponed to another date after completion of 13 days ritual.

375. As per the shastras, the inauspicious period due to mourning on death ends only if you take bathe after 8.24 AM. Since this is not feasible in the modern days of time, the Pundits opine that if you take bath after 5.00 AM, the inauspicious period due to death mourning ends. Reason for taking bathe after 8.24 AM is bit confusing to explain as it is based on almanac and shastras.

376. As prescribed in the shastras, the death which takes place up to 1.30 AM (in the mid of night) goes into the account of previous day, and death taking place after 1.30 AM goes into the account of next day.

377. In the event some news on the death of some one in the parceners family is received by the family performing shardha ceremony, the shardha ceremony will not be abandoned, but continued till end. The inauspicious period for them will begin only after the shardha ceremony if fully completed.

378. A bachelor does not have inauspicious period on account of any death in the family. He must only take purificatory bathe on hearing the news.

379. During marriage ceremony if the parents of either the bride or the bridegroom died, the marriage ceremony will continue to be held till Shesha homa is completed. Sesha Homa is a concluding Vedic fire ritual performed in some Tamil Brahmin weddings, often on the fourth day, to mark the completion of the marriage ceremonies. A portion of the ghee from wedding homa fire is taken and sprinkled

on the bride's head to bless the new union. Till then they need not observe mourning.

380. Supposing shardha ceremony of parents fall due while the family was in the mourning due to the death of some one in one of the parcener's family, the shardha ceremony in a new date can be performed only after the period of mourning gets completed.

381. A sanyasi (one who has formally renounced the world) is not required to observe a period of mourning for their parents death. Upon hearing the news, only a purifying bath is taken as a mark of respect for having taken birth from them.

State of ritual impurity (mourning) : Purificatory bathe

382. Upon receiving the death news of a married daughter, her parents, brothers and unmarried sisters need not observe a full mourning period; instead, they get purified by taking a simple head bathe; the period till they take bathe is observed as short period of mourning.

383. But other relatives if any will consider the period as ritually impure or unclean state which exit before bathing. They too get purified upon taking head bathe. If they had already taken bathe before the news came, still upon hearing the news of the death, they have to bathe again.

384. If a family member for some reasons, received the news of death of their own family member (which has mourning period of ten days) after one year, they need not observe any period of mourning. Simple purificatory bath is sufficient.

385. Similarly, if a parcener received the news of death of any one of the family members (which has mourning period of three days) in seven generations after the initial period of 11 days of ritual, he too need not observe full period of mourning; instead, purificatory head bath is sufficient.

386. The brothers have no mourning period over the death of their sister's husband; simple purificatory bath is sufficient.

387. Similarly, the brothers have no mourning period over the death of their married sister; simple purificatory bath is sufficient.

388. The parents of the daughter have no mourning period over the death of their son-in-law (daughter's husband); simple purificatory bath is sufficient.

State of ritual impurity : One day mourning

389. If the news of the death of a family member which necessitates three days of mourning is received by the relatives/parceners after three days of the death, only for one day mourning period is sufficient.

390. If the news of the death of a family member which necessitates ten days of mourning is received by the relatives/parceners after six months upon the death, then one day mourning period is sufficient.

State of ritual impurity: 1½ days (Pakshini) mourning

391. One and a half days mourning period is called as Pakshini period of mourning. The term comes from ancient traditions.

392. The Pakshini period consists of one day plus two nights or one night plus two full days.

393. In case one received the news of death any time in the day, then they will have to observe that day's night period plus next day's night period as mourning period-Two nights plus one day.

394. Similarly, if the news of death is received in the night, they will have to observe that night plus next two days period as mourning period. They can take bathe in the night of second day or early morning on the third day for purification.

395. If the death news involving mourning for one and a half days- Pakshini- is received after 36 hours of death, then if the news is received during day, the mourning period is restricted to that day and if it is received in the night then the mourning period is also restricted to that particular night only.

396. Whoever attracted ten days mourning period on account of death, if they happen to hear about the news after three months, but before the next six months, mourning period of one and a half days from the time they heard is sufficient.

397. But if the same news is received by them after six months, but before one year, they will have mourning period of one day for the death.

State of ritual impurity : Three days mourning

398. The married daughter of a family has **three days mourning** period for the death of her parents.

399. While a family (say X family) who is observing **ten-day mourning** period for one death, receive within ten days, news of another death news (Say 'Y' family) which also involves ten days mourning, then the family need not observe ten more days mourning after completing the mourning for first death; both the mourning period get overlapped and end on the tenth day itself.

400. In the event the same family (say X family) receive the death news after 11 days, but before 30 days after the ten-day mourning of the first death has been completed, 'X' family will **mourn only for three more days** for the second death.

401. In the event the same family (say X family) receive the death news after 30 days after the ten-day mourning of the first death has been completed, 'X' family will have to observe afresh **ten-days mourning** for the new death.

402. While a family (say X family) who is on **three-day mourning** for one death, receive anytime within three days, death news of another (Say 'Y' family) involving three days mourning, then both the mourning period will get overlapped and end on the third day.

403. However, if the same death news is received after the ten days rituals have been completed, but before 13 days simple purificatory head bath is sufficient.

404. In the event the same news is received on any day after 13th day ritual is concluded, they will have to necessarily observe **three days mourning**.

405. Once the sons and unmarried daughters of a family receive the news of the death of their parents, then they will have to observe ten days mourning period. Due reasons

beyond control, they happen to receive the news say after six months or even one year, the period of **ten days mourning** is still applicable to them.

406. Similarly, regardless of when the wife received the news of the death of her husband-may be immediately, or after few days/few weeks/few months or years, she has to observe ten days mourning over her husband's death.

407. In the event a family (say X family) already observing **three-day mourning** period for one death, death news of another (Say 'Y' family) which involves ten days mourning is received within three days, then the family can not end the mourning on the third day. The mourning period of both will get overlapped and end only on the tenth day, which means additional seven days of mourning is to be observed.

408. While a family (say X family) is observing three-day mourning period for one death, death news of another (Say 'Y' family) which involves **ten days mourning** is received on the fourth day after end of three days mourning. Then say X family will have to observe ten days of mourning for the second death, which means a total of 14 days mourning for two deaths.

409. Supposing a child's parents are on ten days religiously inauspicious period called impure state due to birth of a baby, when the same child died within ten days, both impure state and mourning period of ten days will end on the tenth day to the parents.

410. While 'X' who is engaged in 12 days death ritual receives the news of birth of his child, the death rituals can continue unhindered as the ritually impure state on account

of birth will not affect it. However, if the news of the death of the same child is also received before the 12th day ritual is completed, then both the deaths overlap and ends up on the 13th day when purification ceremony is held.

411. If, however, the child's death occurred after performing the 13th day ritual, then the family will have to observe **ten more days mourning** for the child's death.

412. Another case study. Some one, say 'X' who is in the state of **ten days mourning** is bedridden in serious condition, he can not take bath at the end of tenth day ritual for purification. In that case, some one, say 'Y' can touch him, take bathe, dry up; come again touch him and take bathe, dry up; touch again and take bathe dry up and come again; when he repeats the process ten times, the bedridden person gets purified. However, after the patient returns to normalcy, purification ceremony in the name of some homa will have to be performed at home. This practice was in vague in ancient periods of time in hindu tradition based on Dharma Shastra, though no such procedure is found in the scriptures.

413. Another peculiar custom exists in hindu tradition. Let us understand the following three situations. This is first Scenario. While 'X' was engaged in the post cremation rituals for his demised father, mother of 'X' too expired within ten days ritual period. The post cremation rituals for father will not be discontinued. Guided by the Pundit, the rituals for both father and mother are simulteneously performed as guided by the pundit. The mourning period of ten days for both father and mother gets overlapped and ends on 13th day.

414. The second scenario- While 'X' was engaged in the post cremation rituals for his demised father, mother of 'X' too expired on 11th or 12th day of the ritual underway for his father. 'X' can not perform the 13th day Subasweekaram as the mourning period in honor of mother will extend the ceremony by one day. 'X' will have to perform Subasweekaram for both father and mother on 14th day, after completion of all the rituals meant for both father and mother as guided by the pundit.

415. In the third scenario, While 'X' was engaged in the post cremation rituals for his demised father, mother of 'X' too demised on 13th day before the Subasweekaram commenced at the end of father's 12-day ritual, then 'X' can not perform the 13th day ceremony as the mourning period in honor of mother will extent to enable him perform 12-days ritual for his mother. Therefore, 'X' will have to perform Subasweekaram ceremony for both father and mother only on 26th day after completion of post cremation rituals to them.

416. In the fourth scenario, while 'X' was performing ten-day post cremation rituals for his demised mother, father of 'X' too expired in one of the ten days ritual period. Say the father died on the fifth day of the ritual. The post cremation rituals- for 10 days- for both mother and father will be performed simulteneously as guided by the pundit, but the rituals meant for 11th and 12th days will be performed only after waiting for five more days when the mourning period of 10 days to be observed for his father ends. See below how it is done:

- First five days rituals performed for mother as guided by the pundit. Ritual for mother halts.

- From 6th day onwards five days ritual is performed for father who died on the fifth day during mother's ritual
- First 5 days ritual for mother plus next 5 days ritual for father ends on 10th day.
- From next day remaining seven days ritual (upto 12th day rituals) for both are simulteneously done.
- This thus works out to a total of 17 days rituals to be completed before performing Subasweekaram ceremony on the 18th day.

417. In the fifth scenario, while 'X' was performing ten-day post cremation rituals for both father and mother or either one of them, some one in the family of sons died or the unmarried daughter met death. Since maximum period of ten days mourning is already underway, the death of another family members will not add up. The mourning period for them merges with the mourning period of father/mother to enable the family perform Subasweekaram ceremony for all three on the 13th day.

418. In some families, the head of the family -father- have step wife or even third wife whom they had married unofficially. In certain communities and rural areas, even today, it is quite rampant that the head of the family -husband- marries few more women, live with them and even produce children through them while the real wife is alive. Though the said marriages and relation is not legal in law, based on customary and caste traditions, the death of illegally married wives of one's husband are condoled and mourned for ten days by the official wife and children born to her. However, if they hear the news after one year, then they need to observe only three days of mourning period.

419. When the wife is pregnant, her husband should not shoulder the corpse of any relatives other than his own father, mother and brothers who had no sons or daughters.

Mourning : List of family members whose death warrants ten days of mourning period to the entire members of one family

- Father and Mother
- Own brothers and their wives
- Seven years old plus sons of brothers.
- Death of sons below seven years do not warrant ten days mourning; purificatory head bath is sufficient.
- However, if the son had undergone thread ceremony, then their death causes ten days mourning.
- Unmarried sisters
- Sons and unmarried daughters of father's step wives (who were not officially married, but privately married besides legally married wife)
- Paternal and Maternal Grand parents
- Brothers of father and their wives
- Sons and unmarried daughters of father's brothers
- Sons of those sons from father's brothers

All the above applies to the death in seven generation of parceners

Ten days of mourning period to adapted sons :

- Over the death of their adapted father and adapted mother
- Seven generation parceners of adapted father and their sons, son's sons and unmarried daughters in their family.

- No need to mourn the death of actual parents, simple purgatory head bath is sufficient on hearing the news as mark of respect for having given birth to him.

Ten days of mourning due to death of child :

For the death of a new born child within ten days of its birth the following members observe ten days of mourning.

- Parents of the child
- Married brothers of child's father besides sons borne to step wives of the grand father of the child if any.

Reference:

The mourning days given above are based on the information found in the following books:

1. 'Vaidyanatha Dikshitheeyam: Asausa Kandam'.
2. 'Asausa Deepikai' written by Tamilasura Munivar in the 17th century
3. 'Asausa Deepikai' published by Ma. Vaidyalinga Pillai of Jaffna, in the year 1882
4. 'Agora Siva Pathati', a manual for Saiva religious practices compiled from the Agama texts by Agora Sivacharya who lived in Chidambaram seven hundred years ago
5. 'Samsheba Dharma Sasthram' written by Manjangudi Venkatarama Sastrigal
6. 'Asausa Sukrakam' published by by Nityakamya Mahayagna Samiti
7. 'Abhinavasausa Sankaraham' published by Thiruvaiyaru Srinivasa Press in the year 1933
8. 'Irappu Theettu' published by Sri Jagath Guru Trust

9. 'Varnasrama Dharma Shastram' written by Shri. R. Muthusamy Iyer in the year 1937
10. 'Srartha Niyamangal' written by Kokuvil Vaithikagiriyaratnam Mayilani Brahmasri Somaskanda Gurukkal and
11. 'Soodakamum Asausamum' published by the Thiruvallikeni Karimaran Kalaikappakam, Chennai.